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OR,

A WILD NIGHT'S WILD WORK.

BY J. C. COWDRICK,
AUTHOR OF "BLUE-GRASS BURT," "BROAD-
WAY BILLY," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

SPEEDING TO DOOM.

"My God! they are doomed! Engineers, firemen, passengers—all, all are doomed. No hand can save them. A single track; two Express-trains rushing toward each other at lightning speed; both engineers confident of their right to the road; and I—I am powerless to stop either train. Oh! my God! I shall go mad—mad!"

The time was night.

Without, all was an inky blackness, for dark

SEIZING THE RED LIGHT SIGNAL RALPH LEANED FROM THE CAB WINDOW AND SWUNG IT WILDLY AROUND.

and lowering clouds hid the stars from view, and there was no moon.

It was a night in mid October, and the hour was ten—or a little later, perhaps.

The scene was in the train dispatcher's office of the Mansfield, Cranston & Oakvale Railroad, at Mansfield, in one of the Eastern States.

Besides the dispatcher, Horace Humphrey, and his operator, Clark Conrad, there were three or four other persons present in the office, chief among whom was Mr. Marvin Morgan, the superintendent of the road.

Of the others, one was Ralph Raymond, or "Redlight Ralph" as he was popularly known, the youngest engineer on the line.

He was barely twenty years of age now, and having held his place on the "right" side of the "cab" for two years or more, was still known as the "Boy Engineer."

His father, now dead, had been an engineer on the same road, and at the early age of fifteen Ralph had begun his career as fireman on his father's engine.

Two years and a half later, just before the death of his father, he performed an act of the most daring bravery, saving an accident which might have cost a hundred people their lives, and gaining for himself the sobriquet of "Redlight" Ralph.

For that act of bravery he received the highest praise from the officers of the road, and upon the death of his father was promoted to the vacant place, boy though he was.

And up to the time of our story he had performed his duty as faithfully and well as his father could have done.

Previously to his going upon the road as fireman, he had studied and mastered the art of telegraphy, practicing at the "key" during his spare time out of school in one of the local stations on the line, and now besides being an engineer he was a tolerably good operator.

On the night of which we write he was waiting at Mansfield to run out a special train.

Mr. Joseph Jasper, the president of the road, with his family, and several of the directors, with theirs, were going to Oakvale, the western terminus of the road, owing to rumors of a threatened strike, and Ralph Raymond had been chosen to run their train.

They had expected to leave Mansfield at ten o'clock sharp, but it was now some minutes past that hour, and still the party had not come down to board the cars.

Ralph's engine, with two cars attached, was standing on the side-track a few steps from the office, and he had just "oiled around" and made everything ready for the start.

Phil Peters, the conductor who was to have charge of the "special," was in the office getting the "running-order," and had called Ralph in to sign his name to the "order-book."

The order had been signed and delivered barely a moment, and Phil and Ralph were comparing their watches with the office-clock, when, suddenly, the dispatcher sprang to his feet, his face as pale as death, and a cold perspiration starting out upon his forehead, and uttered the words with which our story opens.

"Heavens! what do you mean?" demanded the superintendent, he, too, springing up with blanched face; "what is the trouble?"

The operator, as pale as his superior, sat with trembling fingers grasping the open "key," ready to flash forth any orders that were given, and all the others present fixed their eyes at once upon the horrified dispatcher.

"I mean just what I said," Mr. Humphrey confirmed, as he pressed his hands to his head. "Trains No. 9 and No. 6 are rushing toward each other at lightning speed, and there is certain to be a collision. Nothing can be done to save them."

"Where are they? and who is at fault?" Mr. Morgan thundered.

"It is the fault of the operator at Cranston, sir, and the trains are between Cranston and Greenwood. Train No. 9 is twenty-five minutes late. I gave orders to the operator at Cranston to 'flag and hold' that train until Train No. 6 arrived. Then I gave Train No. 6 orders to run to Cranston regardless of No. 9. Now the operator at Cranston tells me that his redlight went out, and that No. 9 has passed his station."

"Oh! my God! they are doomed—doomed!" All present clearly understood the situation now, and all shared the dispatcher's alarm.

Let us explain the matter more fully.

Train No. 9 was an Express-train going west, and had the "right-of-way" over train No. 6, which was an Express-train bound east. The regular "passing-point" of these two trains was at Greenwood. There, unless ordered to run

further by special orders from the dispatcher, Train No. 6 must wait until Train No. 9 arrived.

On this occasion Train No. 9 was twenty-five minutes late, and the dispatcher saw that he could advance Train No. 6 to Cranston, thus saving that train the twenty-five minutes wait at Greenwood. Accordingly, he gave orders to the operator at Cranston to stop No. 9 there and hold it until No. 6 arrived. Then, that order having been repeated as understood, he gave orders to No. 6, at Greenwood, to run on to Cranston regardless of No. 9.

A few moments later the operator at Cranston reports that he has failed to execute the order given him, and that No. 9 had passed his station.

The danger is shown. Train No. 9 is rushing on toward Greenwood, having the right-of-way under the regular rule; and Train No. 6, with the right-of-way conferred by special order, is speeding toward Cranston. It is a single-track road, and there is no station between the points named. A collision seems certain to follow.

For a moment no one spoke. All fully realized how helpless they were.

Then suddenly Redlight Ralph exclaimed:

There is one chance—one chance in a thousand, it may be, but still a chance."

All eyes turned instantly to him.

"A chance to prevent this impending collision?" the superintendent queried in eager haste.

"Yes, sir."

"Then tell us what it is, and quickly. Not an instant is to be lost."

"You are right, sir; not a second can be spared. Instead of explaining my idea, I must execute it."

"Mr. Humphrey," turning quickly to the dispatcher, "you said Train No. 10 is in. I believe."

"Yes, Ralph, No. 10 is in."

"Then I have a clear track, and I will try my plan."

Before another word could be spoken, then, the Boy Engineer had flung open the door and sprung out into the darkness.

Hurrying to where his engine was standing on the side-track, he quickly cut it loose from the two cars, and then sprang aboard and sounded the whistle for the switchman to turn the switch.

The fireman was in the cab, and as soon as the switch was turned Ralph pulled open the throttle, and away the "iron-horse" bounded, like a thing of life, much to the fireman's surprise.

"Where be ye off to, Redlight?" that gentleman inquired hastily. "Ye're leavin' yer cars!"

"I know I am," Ralph responded. "I'm off for Haddington Junction, Dan, and we must make the very best run on record. It is a matter of life or death. Look to your fire."

Dan Dawson knew Redlight Ralph well enough to know that no further questions would be answered then, so he stepped down from the cab and interested himself in his fire, while the engine dashed away like the very wind.

Haddington Junction was about four miles from Mansfield. It was but a small station, and had no telegraphic connection with the latter place. How, by going there, could the Boy Engineer hope to avert a danger that was threatening two trains more than forty miles away? We must follow him to learn.

First, however, let us return for a moment to the dispatcher's office.

"By heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Morgan, as he heard Ralph whistle for the switch and saw him start; "that young dare-devil is going out! Where can he be going? What infernal nonsensical idea has he got in his mind?" And then the superintendent gave way to a flood of profanity that almost turned the air blue.

"I cannot understand what his idea is," declared the dispatcher. "It is over forty miles to Cranston, and how he is going to prevent those two trains from running together is more than I can see."

"He can't do it!" the superintendent exclaimed, hotly, "and I would like to know what his idea is."

"Whatever it is, sir," said Phil Peters, the conductor, respectfully, "you may safely bet your hat that Redlight Ralph knows what he is doing."

"Perhaps he does, Phil, but I guess nobody else does."

"I confess that I don't, sir, but all the same I'm willing to bet that it is no fool's idea he has got. He is just like his father used to be; he never makes a move without knowing just what he is doing and why he is doing it."

Phil Peters was one of the oldest conductors

on the road, and such a recommendation from him was as good as gold.

While these remarks were being made, Ralph's engine had passed out of sight.

A moment later and Mr. Jasper and his party came down to their cars, and Mr. Jasper and one of the directors, a young man named Lyman Lambert, entered the office.

"Where is our engine, Mr. Morgan?" the president asked.

In a few words the superintendent explained the whole situation.

"My God!" the president cried. "Can there be nothing done? Must those trains rush on to destruction?"

"Nothing can be done, sir. We are utterly helpless. There is no station between the two points, you know."

"Then they are doomed, indeed."

"But this has nothing to do with our case, Mr. Jasper," young Lambert complained, "and I hope you will have that young engineer discharged immediately. The idea, sir, of our being detained here in this way!"

"Mr. Morgan will do whatever is right, I am sure," said Mr. Jasper, calmly. "All we can do is to sit down and await the result of the next few minutes."

The dispatcher's operator had been busy at the instruments, and now he said:

"Mr. Humphrey, the operator at Watson's reports that stock-train as having passed there."

"Good heavens!" cried the dispatcher, "another collision is bound to come! Here is a stock-train, which should be lying at Watson's, coming on to Mansfield against orders. Redlight Ralph is riding to his death!"

And so it seemed. Watson's was a station a mile east of Haddington Junction, and but three miles west from Mansfield; and if a stock-train had left there, as reported, another collision seemed inevitable.

CHAPTER II.

A CLOSE CALL.

AND such, as Clark Conrad, the operator, had reported, was the case.

There was no station between Watson's and Mansfield, and here, as in the other instance, the dispatcher was powerless to avert the danger of a collision.

Redlight Ralph had the right of road.

This he knew, of course, before starting, as his inquiry concerning Train No. 10 proved.

No. 10 was a local passenger-train, due at Mansfield about nine o'clock, and had arrived there about "on time."

This train being "in," the only other one the special would have to "lay" out for was Train No. 6.

The order Ralph was running on was this:

"PETERS & RAYMOND:—

"Run as special train to Oakvale, regardless of all second-class and irregular trains.

"31—MARVIN MORGAN,
"Per H. H."

"32 O. K."

This order gave the special train the right of way over every other train then on the road, excepting Trains No. 10 and No. 6; and the first-named of these being "in" at Mansfield, Ralph, in starting as he did for Haddington Junction, for what purpose only himself knew, had the entire right of road to that point, and could run without fear of meeting any other train or engine.

All second-class and irregular trains, of course, had been notified of the special and to keep out of its way.

Little did Redlight Ralph dream of the danger that lay ahead. Little did he imagine that an irregular second-class train, regardless of its orders to the contrary, was speeding toward Mansfield right in the face of the expected special, and already upon its time.

Yet such was the fact.

The conductor of the irregular stock-train was a very reckless fellow, who had more than once disobeyed orders to gain a point, and who had got himself into trouble for so doing.

And his engineer was but little better.

They had received notice of the special at a station some miles west of Watson's, and at once they resolved to run to that point to meet it.

This was making about as close a run as could be made with safety, but when they neared that station the conductor went forward to the engine to consult with the engineer about keeping right on to Mansfield.

"Thunder, man!" the engineer protested, "it can't be done! We can't turn a wheel beyond Watson's without being on the time of that special. No, sir; Watson's is as far as we can go."

"But these special trains never get out on time," the conductor urged, "and we can go on to Mansfield as well as not. We won't be more than ten minutes on her time anyhow, and we can blow out our headlight when we get near there, and steal into the upper end of the yard unseen."

"It's a mighty risky thing to do."

"It is better than laying out at Watson's for thirty or forty minutes, though, and besides, it won't be the first time we've stretched our orders and made close runs."

"No, I know it won't; but we risk our lives every time we do it."

"Oh, well, if you're afraid to do it, why, we can lay there! Call for brakes, and we'll take the side-track."

"I'll call for nothing! If you think that I'm afraid to go on to Mansfield, by thunder, you're mistaken! I dare go anywhere where you dare ride. We'll go there now, or we'll go to Hades, and if we meet that special, there's where we will go, and the president and his party along with us!"

With a vicious jerk the engineer pulled the throttle wide open, and away they flew.

Not only were they taking their own lives in their hands, but they were endangering the lives of others as well.

"No danger of it," the conductor cried. "This beats laying out thirty or forty minutes—or an hour it may be—at Watson's, and we shall be home and in bed before that special leaves Mansfield at all."

And on they rushed.

Here were two disasters of a similar kind impending, on the same road and at almost the same time; and while Redlight Ralph was speeding to save one collision, though by what means only he himself could have told, he was unconsciously rushing into the same danger himself.

And, if possible, his danger was even more imminent than that which threatened the two Express-trains; for while the distance between Cranston and Greenwood was twenty miles, from Mansfield to Watson's it was only three, and while the Express-trains still had each from eight to nine miles of clear road ahead, the special engine and the stock-train had but a mile to go ere they would meet.

To those in the dispatcher's office, and the president's entire party was there now, every passing moment was an age of terrible and painful anxiety.

In the presence of ladies Mr. Morgan had ceased swearing, and he stood near the dispatcher with clinched hands and knitted brows, silently waiting to learn the result of the threatening disasters.

Mr. Jasper and the several directors, except Mr. Lambert, stood in a group behind the operator on the other side of the table.

Mr. Lambert was devoting himself to the ladies of the party, and especially to the president's lovely daughter, Miss Jeanne Jasper.

And thus they waited in painful suspense to learn what news the next few minutes would bring.

We, with the author's privilege, will anticipate the telegraph by following the Boy Engineer and keeping apace with his now flying engine.

Once out upon the main track, Ralph had opened wide the throttle, and his noble engine bounded away like a meteor. Then while Dan, the fireman, was looking to his fire, he debated in mind his plan of action.

From Mansfield to Haddingdon Junction, as we have stated, the distance was four miles, and the Boy Engineer wanted to make the run in as many minutes, or in five minutes at the most.

If he could do this, he would arrive there in time to carry out the plan he had hit upon to save the Express-trains from collision; but whether he would find it practicable to carry out that plan remained to be seen.

He could do no more than try it.

By the time he would reach Haddingdon Junction, the endangered trains would each have consumed about seven minutes of time from Greenwood and Cranston respectively, and would be within five or six minutes, at most, of meeting; for both trains were no doubt running at lightning speed.

Would he be in time to save the horrible collision? Heaven grant that he might!

But his plan—what could it be? Where the train-dispatcher and superintendent were at loss and in despair, what could he do?

On, on he flew, like a ball from the cannon's mouth, with his eyes fixed upon the track ahead where the headlight flashed its piercing gleam.

The night was intensely dark, and beyond the

range of the headlight nothing could be seen save here and there a momentary twinkle of light as some house was passed, or seemed to sweep past itself, like a very flash.

Dan Dawson was tortured with curiosity to know the "why and wherefore" of this wild ride.

Could it be that Redlight Ralph had suddenly gone mad?

One glance across at the calm, stern face and keen eyes of the Boy Engineer reassured him upon that point instantly.

Why, though, was he going to Haddingdon Junction? and what had he meant in saying it was a matter of life or death?

Unable to curb his curiosity any longer, he finally turned to ask questions, when, with lightning-like moves, Ralph shut off steam, threw back the reverse-lever and opened the throttle again; then pulled the sand-bar and put on the air-brakes, at the same time sending forth a shrill scream from the whistle, and seizing the red light signal he leaned from the cab window and swung it wildly around.

It was all done in a second, seemingly, and filled with alarm the fireman, half blinded with the glare of light from the still open fire door, glanced ahead instantly to learn the cause, when, to his almost paralyzing dismay, he beheld the headlight of another engine rushing around a curve and down the grade to meet them.

His heart almost ceased to beat.

It would be folly to state that Ralph was not alarmed, too, for he was; but he was not too much alarmed to act promptly, and the moment he had done all in his power to stop his engine, he looked ahead again.

The other engine was almost upon him.

"Stand ready to jump, Dan!" he shouted to the fireman, "but don't jump till the last moment!"

"All right," Dan managed to gasp, and quickly he put himself in position to obey the advice.

It was a trying moment.

Confident of his right to the road, Ralph could but wonder what the opposing engine or train could be.

But there was no time to debate the question, for the danger was right at hand. The two blazing eyes—the headlights—were glaring at each other, but a short distance divided them, and still they rushed on as though determined to test their skill and strength at butting.

What the alarm was on the engine of the stock-train, we will not attempt to describe.

That engineer, too, had reversed his engine, and was doing all in his power to stop, but being on a down-grade and having a heavy train, to stop was impossible.

Had Redlight Ralph had the two cars behind his engine, a collision would certainly have happened; but, being light, and on an up-grade, it was avoided by a hair's breadth.

The engine was a good one, and was quick to obey, and after a brief moment of doubt Ralph saw that he was safe.

"Don't jump!" he shouted. "I've got her, Dan!"

The next moment the engine stopped, and Ralph releasing the brakes at just the right moment, it at once began to run backward, gaining speed with every turn of the wheels.

The space between the two engines at that last moment was not more than ten feet, and the stock-train still rushed ahead at great speed.

It was a narrow escape.

Ralph continued running backward to keep out of the way, whistling loudly for brakes the while, and finally the stock-train was stopped.

Then Ralph got down and went forward to the other engine, where he addressed the conductor and engineer in terms more forcible than polite.

"What are you doing here on my time?" he demanded.

"We forgot the order to lay back for the special," the conductor answered, falsely.

"Well, it will be the last time you will forget an order of the kind on this road, I think. This is the second time my life has almost paid the penalty for your carelessness, and if you are allowed to run another trip, either of you, I shall resign. Now you run on down to that switch and take the siding, and see that you don't get out of it until I return to Mansfield and come out with that special."

"All right, Redlight, we'll get out of your way as soon as we can. Say, though, can't you let this pass and say nothing? There's no harm done, and—"

"No, sir!" Ralph answered, emphatically. "If I had had my train, I should now be a dead man. Nothing could have hindered the collision. I shall report the case as soon as possible."

Returning to his engine then, Ralph backed down to a switch not far away, and the stock-train ran onto the side-track.

Then, once more cautioning them to remain there, the Boy Engineer started on toward Haddingdon Junction, and was soon running at full speed as before.

"Ginger! but that was a narrow escape!" his fireman exclaimed.

"It certainly was," Ralph admitted. "But," he added, consulting his watch, "there will be a narrower one, I am afraid."

CHAPTER III.

AN INTERESTED DIRECTOR.

THIS unforeseen adventure had detained the Boy Engineer over three minutes.

It was a serious loss of time.

Run as he would, he could not hope to reach Haddingdon Junction in less than eight minutes now, counting from the time of his start from Mansfield.

Could he hope to reach there in time to prevent the threatened collision?

It now seemed extremely doubtful.

By the time he could reach there the two Express-trains, forty miles or more away, would be within two or three minutes of meeting.

It did not seem possible for human power to save them now, nor had it from the first; and it did seem folly for Ralph to be making the attempt.

But, as Phil Peters had declared, Redlight Ralph knew what he was about, if no one else did, as the superintendent had supplemented; and he did not mean to give up while a ray of hope could be seen.

On, on he flew, and soon the light at Watson's Station came in sight.

Then Ralph shut off steam and slackened his speed.

"Be ye goin' ter stop?" inquired the fireman.

"Yes," briefly.

"What fer? I thought ye wanted ter git to Had'don Junc. in sich haste."

"I'm going to slack up at Watson's to let you get off."

"Ter let me git off! What's that fer?"

"I want you to take your redlight and not allow any train or engine to pass there till I get back from the Junction."

"Oh! I see. All right, ye kin trust me fer that."

"I know I can, Dan. You see I can't get any orders at the Junction, as there's no wire of this line's in that office, so I must protect myself coming back as far as Watson's."

"Yes, I see, now. I'll keep yer road clear fer ye, you bet!"

"Well, here we are, so off with you."

Dan Dawson picked up his redlight and sprung off upon the station platform, and then Ralph jerked open the throttle and was on his way again like a flash.

The telegraph operator came out of his office at once and accosted Dan.

"What engine was that?" he asked.

"That were th' No. 8, surnamed 'Quickstep,' th' best engine on th' hull line," Dan answered, promptly; "an' th' man what's got his paw on th' throttle is Redlight Ralph, th' Boy Engineer."

"Where's he going?"

"Said he was goin' ter Had'don Junc., and I reckon he's there by this time."

In truth, Ralph's engine was already out of sight.

"But, didn't you meet that stock-train?" the operator inquired.

"You kin bet your life we did, youngster!"

"And how did you get by?"

"How did we get by? Why, bless your youthful soul, youngster, we jumped right over it. We—"

"No, no fooling; it is the dispatcher who wants to know."

"Oh! that makes a difference! Why didn't ye say so? Ye kin tell him we did meet th' stock-train, and came almighty near bumpin' noses with it, too, but we didn't. We 'scaped jest by th' skin of our teeth, an' th' stock-train is now on th' side-track at Big Rock sidin'."

"Say, though, what train was it? and what biz—"

But the operator was gone. He had at once dodged back into his office to report to the dispatcher what he had learned.

"Thank God!" Horace Humphrey the dispatcher exclaimed, as he received the news, "one collision has been averted, and Redlight Ralph is safe!" and he threw himself back in his chair and wiped the perspiration from his face.

"You say Ralph is safe?" demanded Mr. Morgan, eagerly; "where is he?"

Mr. Morgan not being a telegrapher, could not, of course, interpret the magic clickings of the little instrument on the table.

"Yes, he is safe," Mr. Humphrey affirmed, "and has gone on to Haddington Junction."

"Thank heaven for this news!" burst from the lips of nearly all present, and from none more fervently than from those of pretty Jeanne Jasper, at which the face of Mr. Lyman Lambert darkened.

"And where is the stock-train?" the superintendent next asked, "and how was the collision avoided?"

"The stock-train is in the Big Rock side-track, sir. They came very near colliding, as Ralph's fireman reports. I cannot give any particulars till I learn more."

"And Ralph has gone on to the Junction, you say?"

"Yes, sir; and has left his fireman at Watson's to protect his return to that station."

"Bully for Ralph!" cried Phil Peters enthusiastically. "When you catch him off his guard, it will be after he's too old for service!"

"He is indeed a good man," the superintendent acknowledged, "but I must confess I do not understand what he is going to Haddington Junction for."

"No, nor I," declared Peters; "but, as I said before, you can bet that he knows, and—"

"By heavens! I have it!"

So exclaimed the dispatcher, as he sprung to his feet and brought his fist down upon the table with a bang.

"You have what?" demanded Mr. Morgan.

"I have guessed why Redlight Ralph set out in such haste for Haddington Junction."

"You have?"

"Yes; but," as he glanced up at the clock, "I fear this delay he has met with will balk his plans, though Heaven grant it may not."

"I knew it!" exclaimed Peters. "I knew the boy knew what he was doing!"

"But, what is he doing?" demanded the superintendent, considerably nettled that he could not see the point.

For reply, Mr. Humphrey took a small railroad map down from its place on the wall, laid it on the table, and with his index fingers pointed out two stations on it simultaneously.

One of these stations was "Haddington Junction," and the other was a place called "Hillsdale."

"Hip! hip! hurrah!" yelled Phil Peters, as he snatched off his cap and flung it up to the ceiling, "what did I tell ye?"

"Can he do it?" the superintendent asked, fairly trembling now with mingled excitement, anxiety and hope.

"There is a possible chance, sir, but it is only one chance in a thousand—in ten thousand, I may say. By the time Ralph reaches the Junction those trains will be within two or three minutes of each other, and only the promptest kind of action can save them."

"And that's just the sort of action the boy engineer is full of," declared Peters. "If any man alive can save them, he is the one."

"No doubt of that," the dispatcher admitted, "but a further delay of a single minute after he reaches the Junction will render the plan useless. And the chances are decidedly against it, anyhow."

"Will you kindly explain what the young man's idea is, Mr. Morgan?" requested Mr. Jasper.

"Certainly, sir," and the superintendent did so.

"The young man is a quick thinker," the president declared, "and as quick and prompt to act. I admire him. But, Mr. Humphrey, turning to the dispatcher, 'there is something about that order of yours which I do not clearly understand.'"

"What is it?" the dispatcher inquired.

"You say that Train No. 9 is twenty-five minutes late, while Train No. 6 is about on time."

"Yes, sir."

"I think," remarked Mr. Morgan, "you are taking up the same point I thought of at once myself, but for which I found the reason immediately. You desire to know why the order was to hold No. 9 at Cranston, instead of running both trains to some point midway between there and Greenwood. Am I right?"

"You are. I cannot understand why, when one train was expected at Cranston about the same time that the other was at Greenwood, the passing-point was not made at some place between those stations, thus saving further delay to either train. By the order you gave you were

keeping No. 9 lying idle at Cranston during the entire time Train No. 6 was running from Greenwood to that place, and thus making No. 9 still later than ever. It does not look very business-like."

"My first impression exactly," declared Mr. Morgan; "but I saw at a glance why the order had been given in that way. In the first place, it is of the utmost importance that Train No. 6 should reach Mansfield on time to-night. I mentioned this to Mr. Humphrey this afternoon. And secondly, there is at present but one available side-track between Greenwood and Cranston, and that is only four miles east of Greenwood. The one west of Cranston is full of cars, and the one at Hillsdale is useless owing to a broken switch; though it is possible that the switch is repaired by this time. We have had no notice to that effect, however."

"Are these the reasons, Mr. Humphrey," turning to the dispatcher, "why you handled the trains as you did?"

"They are, sir," was the reply. "To run Train No. 9 to the siding just east of Greenwood, sir, would have detained Train No. 6 fully twenty minutes, and I knew from what you told me this afternoon that that would not do. The proper place for them to pass was at Hillsdale; but having received no notice that the switch had been repaired, I could not, of course, risk sending them there. And the siding west of Cranston being full of cars, it was impossible for them to pass there. Under the circumstances, one train or the other had to be detained; and Mr. Morgan having told me to get No. 6 through on time if possible, I took the only course open to attain that end."

"The explanation is quite satisfactory," said Mr. Jasper, who had considerable knowledge of the subject, "and you adopted the only course open to you, so far as I can see. I am finding no fault you understand, Mr. Morgan; I merely desired to know why the trains were handled in that way."

"I understand, sir," the superintendent declared. "But," he added, "we did not succeed in handling them as we desired, and what the result is to be I dare not imagine."

"True, and I fear the worst."

"And this," remarked one of the directors, a Mr. Howell, a fat old gentleman who had but little practical knowledge of railroad business, "brings us to the question of the operator who disobeyed his order. What do you intend doing with him, Mr. Morgan?"

"I shall discharge him to-morrow!" the superintendent declared emphatically, "and also the conductor and engineer of the stock-train who came so near causing another collision."

"Perfectly right," agreed Mr. Jasper. "They should not be allowed to work an hour longer than is necessary to relieve them."

"I agree with you, so far as the conductor and engineer are concerned," said Mr. Howell. "Theirs seems to have been a flagrant piece of carelessness and disregard of orders. In the case of the operator, however, is there not some extenuating circumstance to account for his misfortune and mitigate his offense?"

"No, sir, not one. Receiving such an important order, it was his duty to carry it out under any and all circumstances."

"But, I understand that his signal-light went out, and—"

"Pardon me, Mr. Howell, but it was his business to see that it did not go out," interrupted the superintendent. "Why, sir, a hundred lives depended on that red light!"

"So I understand, and I am interested in the matter. As you are going with us to Oakvale, Mr. Morgan, I will have you give me further insight into the train-order system as we ride along."

"I will do so with pleasure, sir."

CHAPTER IV.

RALPH'S PLAN REVEALED.

ON, on, like a bird on the wing, sped Redlight Ralph's engine, the "Quickstep," as it was named, and Ralph, with his hand on the throttle, peered steadily ahead.

He was nearing the end of his wild ride now, and a minute or two more would decide whether or not his effort had been in vain.

Certain it was that everything depended on him, and if his plan failed, then the two Express-trains, now so close to each other, were doomed to collide.

And the horror of such a collision—what imagination can picture it?

But, let us hasten to reveal what the boy engineer's plan was.

At Haddington Junction the track of the Mansfield, Cranston & Oakvale Railroad was

crossed by the track of the Windsor, Haddington & Middleburgh Railroad, and there the latter company had a telegraph office.

After crossing the M. C. & O., the W. H. & M. track went on to Haddington proper, and thence on for some miles to the south. Then it took a turn to the west, and drew back to the M. C. & O. at an easy angle, until at Hillsdale the two roads ran side by side for some little distance.

At Hillsdale there was a sort of "gap" in the hills, and the M. C. & O. approached that place from each direction in a long curve, thus avoiding a tunnel through the hill in a direct course, but adding two or three miles to the length of the road.

The M. C. & O. swung around the end of the hill on the north side of the "gap," seeming not unlike some mammoth horseshoe, near the toe of which the W. H. & M. had a station, which was so situated as to command a view of the M. C. & O. on both sides of the hill.

This place, Hillsdale, on the M. C. & O. line, was about half-way between Greenwood and Cranston, and there, or near there, it was believed the two Express-trains would meet.

Redlight Ralph's idea may now be understood.

If he could reach Haddington Junction in time, and from there could get word by telegraph to the operator at Hillsdale, he, the Hillsdale operator, might be able to signal the trains and stop them!

This, too, was the idea which was at last discovered by Mr. Humphrey the dispatcher, and the map on which he indicated the two stations to the others in the office, was a map of the Windsor, Haddington & Middleburgh line.

But, as Redlight Ralph had declared, and as the dispatcher had repeated, it was but one chance in a thousand.

Suppose he reached Haddington Junction all in good time, but there found the wire open and useless. Or, suppose he could not get the operator at Hillsdale until too late. Or again, the wire being all right, the operator on hand, and no interruption occurring; suppose one of the trains had already passed that point.

It was indeed a long chance, but it was a chance not to be despised.

Ralph did not shut off steam until the last moment, and then he shut off and reversed with almost as much suddenness as when in danger of a collision with the stock-train some minutes previously.

And he brought his engine to a stop right at the door of the Junction office.

This office was not a regular station, but merely a small signal station where trains were protected in crossing on either road.

Ralph found the door of the little office locked, but there was a light within, and glancing in through the window he saw that the operator was not there.

Having forgotten the special train, perhaps, and not expecting any train just at that time, he had evidently stepped out for a moment.

But Ralph had no time to spare in waiting for him, so with a sudden and heavy kick he burst the door open and stepped in.

He knew the arrangement of the office quite well, having spent many an hour there with the day operator some years previously when he was learning telegraphy, and knew at a glance which of the instruments was the one communicating with Hillsdale.

The night operator being a new man there, he had never seen him.

The wire was busy at the moment, but Ralph opened the key at once, and making the signal indicating—"Please, wait a moment," began to "call" Hillsdale.

The other operator, the one who was working, was not inclined to wait, however, and demanded to know who Ralph was, and where.

Ralph answered by signing the office signal, "H. J.," and called again.

But the operator whom he had broken in upon and interrupted was not satisfied at having the wire taken from him thus peremptorily, and said:

"Say, you fellow, you're breaking; get off till I'm done, will you?"

"One moment," Ralph requested; "this is very important;" and again he called the Hillsdale station.

And, to his great joy, the operator at that station responded.

Before Ralph could say a word to him, though, the other office, whichever it was, interrupted again.

"You can't use this string till I am done," the operator there snapped.

"I must," Ralph answered; but before he could add anything more the contending operator interrupted again.

Nor can we blame him, for the right to the wire was undoubtedly his.

Redlight Ralph saw this too, and he saw also that precious seconds were fast slipping away; but, what could be done?

By this time, could he have had the use of the wire at once, his business with Hillsdale would have been finished.

What was he to do?

The contending operator would not give way, nor would he allow Ralph to explain how important his business with Hillsdale was.

We must explain here that it is utterly impossible for more than one operator to work at one time on an ordinary wire. When one key is working, all others must of necessity be closed.

Communication by telegraph, using all the abbreviations of the craft, is lightning itself; and though numerous words had been flashed to and fro since Ralph touched the key, barely ten seconds had as yet elapsed.

But they were ten seconds too many.

Suddenly a half-forgotten point came back to Ralph, and he made use of it instantly.

"55, 55," he signaled rapidly, and all contention ceased instantly, and the wire was his.

This signal—"55"—meant, on that road—"This is important, and must have precedence over all other business."

Every road has a similar signal, some using one character or combination of characters to express the meaning, and some another, and that signal is held sacredly in reserve for cases of emergency where it is absolutely necessary that the office using it should have the use of the wire instantly, no matter what other business it interrupted.

Hearing this signal, every key must be closed instantly, no matter if the superintendent, or even the president himself, if an operator, be working; but if the business for which the signal was used proves trivial or of little importance, then let the operator using it look to himself.

Having spent many hours in this office, as stated, it was but natural that Redlight Ralph should have become familiar with the telegraphic signals of that road.

The moment he made the signal "55," then, the wire was at his command.

Calling the Hillsdale office again, and getting a reply at once, he asked:

"Do you see any head-lights on the M. C. & O.?"

"Yes," came the reply, "I see two; and one is—"

"For God's sake stop the trains, or there will be a collision. Can you do it?"

"O. K."

That was all the answer he got, but those two letters, which in railroad parlance signify "all right," were snapped out with such sudden haste that Ralph knew the operator had sprung at once to the task.

All now depended on him, the operator. Redlight Ralph could do no more.

Immediately after the O. K. from the operator at Hillsdale, the dispatcher's office called "H. J.," the signal for Haddington Junction.

Ralph answered.

"Who is there?" the dispatcher asked.

"I am an engineer on the M. C. & O.," Ralph replied.

"What is the trouble at H. D.?"—the signal for Hillsdale.

Ralph explained the situation briefly, adding that he had run down from Mansfield by special engine in order to reach Hillsdale by telegraph.

"Hope nothing happens," the dispatcher observed, adding:

"It is about time your company run a wire into H. J. office, I think. It would be convenient for both roads."

"Yes," Ralph agreed, "it would be a good thing, no doubt."

No more was said, then, and the wire resumed its usual clicking, the operator whom Ralph had interrupted taking up his work where he had been obliged to break off; and Ralph settled back in the chair to await the result.

The next moment the door was flung open, a great, lubberly giant of a fellow sprung into the office, and, without a word, he caught hold of Redlight Ralph and jerked him out of the chair and sent him reeling backward against the wall.

If size went for aught, this fellow was big enough to make two of the Boy Engineer, who, though of medium height and solidly built, was not heavy.

"Who are you, and what do you mean by breaking into this office in this way?" the fellow demanded, prefixing, interspersing and

sufficing his inquiry plentifully with blood-curdling oaths.

"Who are you?" Ralph counter-questioned, the hot blood mounting to his face, and his eyes flashing.

"I'm the operator here, that's who!" the big fellow snarled.

"Well, you needn't come tearing around like this, pushing other people about, if you are the operator here," Ralph hotly rejoined. "If you had been here attending to business, it would not have been necessary for me to break in."

"Be careful how you talk, or I'll wipe the floor with you! What business had you to break in here anyhow?" still seasoning his language strongly with "cuss-words."

"Find out," Ralph retorted sharply.

"I'll find out, and I'll find you out! I'll fire you out, too!"

"I wouldn't be in a hurry about it; you'd better sit down and get your wind first."

"I've got wind enough to attend to you, I guess. Say, what do you want here?"

"None of your business! If you had been on hand you would have known. Didn't you get notice by letter of a special train to leave Mansfield to-night?"

Ralph knew he had received such notice, for it was lying on the table even then.

The big fellow's face paled instantly. It was clear that he had forgotten it.

The truth was, he had just been across a nearby field to his boarding-place, where he was a little "sweet" on the hired girl, who treated him liberally to milk.

His paleness lasted only for a moment, though, and then he became even more arrogant than before.

"No business of yours whether I had notice or not!" he cried fiercely, "and it's nothing to you if I was out; I left the signal set right for your road!" which was true. "And now you get out of here!" and he pointed to the door.

"I shall go when I get a reply to my message," Ralph answered firmly, "and not before!"

"Who sent your message?"

"I did."

"Well, you're going out now," and as he spoke, the big fellow laid hold of Ralph to put him out.

Then followed a brief struggle, during which the chair was overturned and the stove nearly so, and then one of the two men went crashing through the window and fell to the ground with a thud.

That one was not Ralph.

CHAPTER V.

JUST IN TIME.

THE telegraph operator at Hillsdale was a young man named Charlie Chester.

He was a bright, active and quick-thinking young fellow, and always on hand when on duty.

On the night of which we write he was seated in his office, and not being very busy, was reading.

Presently he glanced out of the window, and as he did so, he noticed two headlights on the M. C. & O. Road, one bound east and the other west, and both coming down the long curve around the hill.

"The Express-trains are going to pass here to-night, it seems," he remarked to himself as he glanced up at his clock. "Train No. 9 is a little late to-night."

Little did he imagine the truth.

Being so near to the M. C. & O. track, and seeing these trains every night, though seldom both at once, it was but natural that he should know their numbers and the time they were due.

On two or three previous occasions he had seen both trains coming at once, head to head, the same as now; but they had then met and passed at the switch safely.

They undoubtedly would do so this time.

Presently, though, came the recollection that the switch was broken, and had not, to his knowledge, been repaired; and he wondered at the trains being sent to that point to pass.

Barely had this thought presented itself, when some one called his office on one of the wires, and he sprung to answer it.

Then followed the "struggle for circuit," as we have described it.

Charlie managed to answer his call, but the contention continued, until suddenly the signal "55" was flashed forth, when it ceased instantly.

Then Charlie answered, and listened to what Redlight Ralph said.

Yes, there the headlights were, two trains coming, and one of them was now drawing close.

This Charlie attempted to explain, but Ralph cut him short with his hasty request for him to signal the trains and stop them.

To do this, not one second was to be lost, and snatching a hasty "O. K." on the key, the operator caught up a red light, and rushed hatless and coatless from the office.

Straight to the M. C. & O. track he ran with all the speed he could command.

On the side of his lantern was a torpedo, and this he quickly took off and secured to the rail. Then catching up the lantern, he ran with it at full speed around the curve toward the most distant of the two trains.

Fast as he ran, though, the trains were going twenty times faster, and in a few seconds he heard the one behind come thundering after him around the curve.

Then there came the loud report of the torpedo and a sharp whistle for brakes.

At that moment Charlie had just gained the straight line beyond the curve, where he could see the headlight of the other train, and there he swung his red light violently to and fro across the track to signal it to stop.

Fortunately the signal was seen almost instantly, and another "squeal" for brakes was heard.

A moment later and the train which had been signaled by the torpedo came tearing along, and Charlie had barely time to jump aside when it swept past him like the wind.

Its speed was greatly reduced, though, the engine was reversed and was belching forth a stream of living fire, and fire was flying from every wheel under pressure of the brakes.

It was a thrilling moment.

To see those two mighty monsters of iron, with their flaming eyes and fiery breath, rushing straight at each other, and to know that behind each one were a hundred or more human beings, were terrible, indeed.

But what if they had not been signaled? What if they had come suddenly upon each other on that curve, each going at the rate of forty miles an hour at least—Heavens! can the imagination picture anything more terrible?

As soon as the eastward-bound train swung around the curve, the engineers caught sight of each other's headlight, and both renewed their efforts to stop, each wondering what train the other could be, and by what misunderstanding it was there.

Finally both trains were stopped, though barely an engine's length apart, and then Charlie Chester hastened back to his office.

As soon as the trains were stopped, the engineers and conductors got off and ran forward to consult with one another, and all met in the glare of the headlights between the two engines.

The conductor of No. 9 was the first to speak.

"What in Hades are you doing here?" he demanded.

"What are you doing here?" cried the conductor and engineer of No. 6, as they produced their orders and showed them.

"Thunder!" exclaimed No. 9's conductor, "we had no orders! We were going for Greenwood on our rights, and about as fast as we could wheel ourselves along, too."

"And we were going for Cranston on this order! There is a screw loose somewhere, sure."

"It was a close shave for us."

"You're right it was! Who was it signaled us?"

"Give it up!"

"Well, how about passing? Since we did not bump noses, we have no time to stand here and congratulate ourselves."

"You are right. Well, you back your train around the curve and beyond the switch, and we will pull ahead and back in on the side-track."

"All right, that's about the way to do it, I guess," and so they separated.

Train No. 6 was backed around the curve and beyond the side-track, and Train No. 9 pulled up beyond the switch to back it out of the way, and then it was discovered that the switch was broken and the rails spiked.

Railroad men are not easily balked, though, and in a few minutes a claw-bar and a sledge were found, and the spikes removed. Then the rails were turned to the side-track, spiked there temporarily, and Train No. 9 backed in out of the way.

This done, No. 6 started on its way, leaving No. 9 to pull out of the siding and secure the switch as they had found it.

While this was going on, Charlie Chester came out of his office again, having reported to Redlight Ralph the success of his work, and enlight-

ened the trainmen concerning who had signaled them, etc.

It had been a narrow escape.

In the mean time, Redlight Ralph, after having with considerable of science and a good deal of luck managed to pitch the burly and belligerent operator through the window, had resumed his seat at the desk.

He was in a fever of anxiety to learn what the result of his effort to save the collision would be.

A minute or two passed, and hearing no further sound from the operator whom he had assisted out of the office with more suddenness than ceremony, he became alarmed.

What if he had broken the fellow's neck!

Catching up a lantern he hurried out to learn what had become of him.

He found him lying upon his back, breathing heavily, and just coming to. The fall had for the time rendered him senseless.

Helping him up, Ralph assisted him back into the office.

The fellow was now completely subdued.

"Are you much hurt?" Ralph inquired.

The fellow mumbled something to the effect that he guessed not, and dropped into his chair as limp as a dish-rag.

"I'm sorry I had to handle you so roughly," Ralph remarked, apologetically, "but another time perhaps you will not be in such haste to put a person out of your office. If you had spoken to me civilly when you first came in, I would have explained; but you gave me no chance to explain. Civil words are better than curses, under any circumstances."

The operator grunted, but said nothing.

Just then, some five or six minutes having now elapsed, the operator at Hillsdale called "H. J.," and Ralph responded quickly.

"It is all right," Charlie said; "I had just time to stop the trains, but that was all. It was the narrowest escape I ever saw in my life."

"Thank God I was in time!" Ralph responded.

"Have the trains passed?"

"No; the switch is broken, and it will take them some time."

"Well, so long as they are safe, that is the main thing. I am glad you were on hand, and I shall take pains to inform our superintendent of the great service you have rendered. I must be going now, so good-night."

"Good-night," came the response, and the business was ended.

"What is all that about?" inquired the operator, who had been listening, now filled with curiosity to know what had been going on.

"Perhaps the operator at Hillsdale will explain, if you ask him civilly," Ralph answered. "I haven't time. Don't you forget that that special train has not gone west yet."

With these words the Boy Engineer left the office, and in a moment more was upon his engine and starting back to Watson's.

The importance of the service he had rendered, with the assistance of the Hillsdale operator, can hardly be calculated. Thousands of dollars' worth of property had been saved from destruction, and, what was of more supreme importance, a hundred persons, or more it may be, had been snatched from the very jaws of death.

Starting off slowly at first, Ralph got down from the cab and attended to the fire, and then getting back again to his place, increased his speed.

He was not long in running back to Watson's, where his fireman's redlight, as the faithful fellow stood at his post on the track, was the first light to catch his eye.

"I see you're right on hand, Dan," Ralph said, when he had stopped at the platform and jumped down from the engine.

"You bet I am!" was the cheery response. "When I'm set down to flag, you kin bet no engineer is goin' ter get past me unless he's blind."

"That's the way to do it. Put your redlight down on the edge of the platform now, and while I am getting orders you drop ahead to the tank and take water."

"All right," Dan responded, and he sprung to obey.

A moment later a whistle for brakes was heard, and the lights of an engine were seen coming west from the direction of Mansfield, running backward.

Wondering what engine it could be, Ralph caught up the redlight and swung it, and the engine came to a stop.

It proved to be the engine of the stock-train with which Ralph had previously come so near into collision, and he saw that if he had been a

little earlier, and had started from Watson's, he would have met it again.

"You fellows will keep on till you play the deuce!" the Boy Engineer exclaimed hotly.

"What are you doing back here?"

"We had to run back to get water. Our engine is bone dry."

"If you had stopped here in the first place, as you should have done, you would have water. How did you get here without 'running a flag' ahead of you?"

"Why, there's no train due!"

"That makes no difference! You had no right to move a foot without sending a man ahead with a redlight. If you had been two minutes later you would have met me again!"

"Well, how could we know that? We—"

"You couldn't know it, and that is the very reason you should have used every precaution. I would like to be superintendent of this road for just one minute, and there would be two situations vacant. Did you leave a flagman at Big Rock, to protect your run back?"

"Yes, of course."

"It is a wonder you thought of it! Well, get water, and then get back to Big Rock as soon as possible, and out of my way!"

Fairly boiling with rightful vexation, then, Ralph set his redlight down in place again, and entered the office.

CHAPTER VI.

AN ENEMY APPEARS.

LET us now return to the dispatcher's office at Mansfield.

Mr. Morgan, the superintendent, was pacing to and fro across the floor of the office in painful agitation of mind; Mr. Jasper and Mr. Howell were in earnest conversation; Phil Peters was entertaining the other directors, except Mr. Lambert, who was still devoting himself to the ladies of the party.

Horace Humphrey, the dispatcher, sat silent in his chair, while Clark Conrad, his operator, attended stoically to the routine business of the hour, but the faces of both wore an expression of strained anxiety.

Suddenly Mr. Morgan paused in his walk, and demanded:

"Mr. Humphrey, isn't it about time we heard something? It is fully ten minutes now since Redlight Ralph passed Watson's, going west. Hadn't he ought to be back there soon?"

"I am expecting to hear from him at any moment now, sir," was the reply. "He certainly ought to be back there by this time, whether he was successful in his undertaking or not."

"So I should think. This uncertainty is terrible."

"It cannot last many minutes longer. We shall soon know—Ah! here is Ralph at the key now," and the dispatcher leaned eagerly forward to catch the words the rapid instruments were clicking.

"What does he say?" the superintendent asked excitedly.

The dispatcher listened attentively for a moment, and then opened his key, looked up—his face proclaiming the good news at once—and exclaimed:

"Saved, thank God, saved!"

What a sigh of relief went up from all present!

"Hip! hip! hurrah!" yelled Phil Peters, throwing up his cap again and fairly dancing for joy. "Three cheers for Redlight Ralph, the Boy Engineer! Hip! hip! hurrah!"

Mr. Morgan's face seemed so relieved that he looked as though he wanted to join Phil and execute a genuine breakdown then and there, but was evidently restrained by the dignity of his position.

Every face was bright now, where only a second previously every one had been sad.

It was indeed good news.

As soon as Phil Peters subsided so that Mr. Humphrey could make himself heard, he said:

"Yes, thank Heaven! the collision was averted by a hair's breadth. Ralph got word to the operator at Hillsdale just in the nick of time, and he signaled the trains."

"And have the trains passed each other?"

"I suppose they have by this time, sir."

"Very good. You may tell that operator at Cranston to come to my office to-morrow, and also the conductor and engineer of that stock-train. Also give orders to have that switch at Hillsdale repaired the first thing in the morning."

"I will do so," the dispatcher said, and then he turned again to the instruments and gave

Redlight Ralph orders to run back from Watson's to Mansfield.

Turning to the president, the superintendent said:

"Your engine will be here in a few minutes now, Mr. Jasper, and if you are ready, you and the others may as well get into the cars."

"No, no!" exclaimed the ladies at once; "we must first see our brave engineer, and thank him for what he has done. Will you please to have him come in here when he arrives, Mr. Morgan?"

"Certainly, if you wish it, ladies," was the answer.

"May I ask why he is called the 'Boy Engineer?'" asked Mrs. Howell, wife of the director of that name. "I notice you call him that, sir," turning to Phil Peters.

"It is because he is a boy, madam," the conductor answered. "He is hardly twenty years old."

"Can it be possible?"

"He is every inch a man in experience, though," declared Mr. Morgan, "and a good one, too. He is to be trusted anywhere at any time."

And so the conversation ran while they waited for the Boy Engineer to arrive.

And while they are waiting, and we are waiting, too, let us put in a few words by the way.

Mr. Joseph Jasper, the president of the road, was a very wealthy man, owning a good share of the stock of the road.

The same may be said of Mr. Lyman Lambert.

The latter was a young man, whose father had been one of Mr. Jasper's bosom friends.

Mr. Jasper had a wife and a daughter, who were with him on this occasion, and the latter of whom has been mentioned.

Jeanne Jasper was a lovely girl, about eighteen years of age, and as gentle and kind in disposition as she was beautiful of face and form.

From words which we have let fall here and there in the foregoing chapters, the reader may have formed the idea that Lyman Lambert was in love with Jeanne.

Such was the case. He was madly in love with her.

And she—well, we cannot say that she looked upon him with much favor, though it was her father's command that she should do so.

Mr. Jasper had promised his daughter's hand to Mr. Lambert, and the latter looked upon her as his.

The young lady herself had entirely different views. She loved her father, and in most of things obeyed him, but at Mr. Lambert she drew the line. She had said nothing yet, but in her heart she had long since resolved that she would never marry him.

The truth to tell, away down in her heart she loved another, one whose name she would not have dared to mention to her father.

And that other was—Ralph Raymond, or "Redlight Ralph" the "Boy Engineer."

And Ralph loved her.

This was their secret, but not a secret between them can we say, for neither knew the thought of the other, and both kept the secret sacredly locked within their hearts.

Jeanne could not, of course, be the first to make it known, according to the Hoyle of love-making; and Ralph, being but a humble engineer, and poor, could not aspire to the hand of so wealthy a girl, the daughter of the president of the road.

Ralph and Jeanne had known each other for years—in fact, they had been schoolmates, and as they had grown up their childish liking for each other had ripened into love.

Their stations in life being so wide apart, however, their love seemed never likely to realize attainment to marriage.

This secret of love was half-suspected by Lyman Lambert, and if Ralph Raymond had an implacable enemy in the world, that enemy was he.

He hated Ralph, and his position as director of the road, to which position he arose upon the death of his father, made it possible for him to do the Boy Engineer serious harm.

When Redlight Ralph had received his orders at Watson's, and had finished conversation with the dispatcher, he bade good-night to the operator and went out.

The engine of the stock-train had just finished taking water, and was coming away from the tank.

Ralph picked up his redlight and "swung them up," and when they stopped at the platform where he stood, he said:

"Now don't forget that that special train has

not left Mansfield yet. I don't want to meet you again to-night."

With an angry snort the conductor of the stock-train bade Ralph go to an unmentionable warm and sulphurous clime, and the engineer jerked open the throttle and away they went.

Then Ralph's fireman came down with his own engine, and the Boy Engineer sprang aboard and followed on after the other.

"Th' blamed ga oots!" Dan Dawson complained, "they wanted ter scare me away from th' tank; but I didn't scare fer a cent. When I had water aboard, though, I moved ahead an' let 'em fill up."

"That was all right," said Ralph. "Those fellows are doing bad work to-night."

"You're right they be! an' I shouldn't wonder if Jack Daws an' Giles Given was a-lookin' fer new jobs to-morrer."

These were the names of the conductor and engineer of the stock-train, respectively.

"No, nor I," Ralph agreed.

Then Dan wanted to know what all the hurry and excitement had been about, and why Ralph had made such a wild run to Haddingdon Junction, and Ralph explained.

They ran on very cautiously until they had passed Big Rock siding, where they found the other engine safely on the side-track, and then Ralph increased his speed and was soon at Mansfield.

There the superintendent called him at once into the office.

"Raymond," he said, "you've done a noble deed, and one which shall not be forgotten."

"And allow me to congratulate you and also thank you," cried Mr. Jasper, as he grasped his hand. "I shall see that you are suitably rewarded for this night's work."

Ralph attempted to make light of it, but the ladies pressed forward and fairly overwhelmed him with praises and thanks.

And none were so welcome as those of pretty Jeanne Jasper.

She caught his right hand in both of hers, and said:

"The same brave Ralph you were at school! I cannot tell you how thankful I am that it was you to save the frightful disaster."

Her manner was not half so enthusiastic as that of the other ladies had been, nor did she utter half so many words; there was an expression in her eyes, however, and a tremulous pressure from her soft, warm hands, which told more than words.

"Thank you," Ralph said, "I have done only my duty." And as he spoke he—acting upon a sudden impulse—gave the girl's hand one quick pressure, and his eyes, to her, seemed fairly to burn into her own.

The moment he had done this he was startled, but in the same instant came a pressure in return, a firm, warm and passionate pressure that caused Ralph's heart to bound.

This was done in a moment, and no one noticed it—Hold, we mistake; the evil eyes of Lyman Lambert were upon the pair, and he gnashed his teeth in silent rage.

Phil Peters had been trying to get a chance to get hold of one of Ralph's hands, he cared not which one, and the moment he did he grasped it and shook it vigorously.

"Redlight," he cried, "you are a chief! I love you!"

"Thank you, Phil; I'm glad I 'got there.'"

"And so are we all! I tell you what, my boy, things looked dubious for a time."

"Mr. Lambert," said Mrs. Jasper, "have you no word for the young man?"

Lambert was hanging back sullenly, with a scowl upon his not-over-handsome face, and Mrs. Jasper noticed it.

"No," he answered. "I think it has been overdone already. We pay our servants to do their duty, and he has done no more than his."

Every eye was upon the young director in an instant, and those of Jeanne Jasper were full of scorn unutterable.

As for Ralph, he paid no attention to the remark, but said:

"While you are congratulating me, ladies and gentlemen, I hope you will not forget the operator at Hillsdale. He, and not I, saved the accident. The honor must be given to him; I can claim but a very trifling share of it."

No need for us to repeat all the conversation of the next five minutes. Suffice it to add that Ralph received the heartiest praise from all, from the humble operator and conductor to the wealthy president; and after he had told his story in full, and had answered the many questions of the superintendent, he was allowed to return to his engine, which he again put in order for his trip.

CHAPTER VII.

A NEEDED REFORM.

It was now half-past ten.

Trains No. 9 and No. 6 had reached and passed Greenwood and Cranston respectively, and everything along the line was again running smoothly.

The president and his party now entered their cars, Superintendent Morgan going with them, and as soon as Phil Peters swung his lantern, Redlight Ralph pulled the throttle and the train started.

The night, as we have said, was dark, and it had every appearance of a storm.

Within the cars, though, all was warm and bright, and a tempting supper was served soon after the train had started.

The two cars consisted of—one a combined drawing-room and dining-car, and the other a sleeping-car.

Both were private cars belonging to the directors.

After the supper had been disposed of, Mr. Jasper, Mr. Howell, one of the other directors and Mr. Morgan, retired to the smoking-compartment to enjoy their cigars, leaving Mr. Lambert and the other male members of the party to entertain the ladies.

The latter declared that they were not in the least sleepy, and would prefer a game at whist to retiring; so as soon as the tables were cleared, the cards were brought out.

It was soon found, however, that there was just one person too many to fill the two sets, and a lively discussion arose as to who should be the one to play.

Each one present promptly insisted upon being the idle one, and Mr. Lambert urged Jeanne Jasper to take his place; but she firmly refused, and settled the matter by taking up a book and seating herself in a distant seat.

But she did not read. She soon had her pretty head comfortably settled in one of the bowed windows of the car, where she could look straight ahead and see the glare of the headlight as it flashed along, revealing a constantly changing panorama of rocks, trees, fences, bridges etc., and where, whenever the train swung around a curve in the right direction, she could catch a glimpse of the young engineer as he stood at his post, his hand on the throttle and his eyes peering straight ahead.

How noble! how fearless he was! were her secret thoughts.

Lyman Lambert's eyes were upon her almost constantly, and the flame of jealousy burned hotly in his breast. He guessed what she was doing, and almost correctly surmised her very thoughts. Whist had no charm for him, and he played a miserable game.

And Redlight Ralph—what were his thoughts? They were not unlike those of the girl. He loved her; her life was now intrusted to his care; and never before had he been more careful at his post.

The fond pressure of her hand could be felt still, and in that one pressure she had told him—what?

She had told him that she loved him. In that one brief moment they had, without words, confided their secret to each other.

Once, when turning a sharp curve, he glanced back for an instant, and in the light of the car windows saw the face of the beautiful girl, with her eyes fixed upon him.

Jeanne quickly brought one of her slender white hands up just a little into the light and gave him a signal that she saw him and Ralph responded in like manner.

Then with bounding heart he turned again to his duty.

His joy was of short duration, however.

Soon came thoughts of doubt and despair. Was she not merely flirting with him? or if not that, was it at all likely that he could hope ever to win her hand?

With these torturing thoughts in his mind he gave a spiteful pull at the whistle, as though he would like to pull at the neck of Lyman Lambert in the same way; gave a vengeful tug at the throttle, as though he would like to have that individual standing before him on the track; and with renewed energy the train plunged onward through the gloom.

In the smoking-compartment, Mr. Howell had again opened conversation with Mr. Morgan concerning the train-order system of the road.

"Now, Morgan," he said, "I know little or nothing about this business, as I have never interested myself in it, but this narrow escape of to-night has opened my eyes to the fact that there must be something wrong somewhere."

"And so there was!" the superintendent in-

stantly exclaimed. "If that operator at Cranston had obeyed his order, all would have been well. He will never have a chance to do such a thing again on this road."

"I admit, sir, that the operator should have performed his duty, but was there any further precaution taken to prevent a collision in case he did not do so?"

"Well, no; but then no further precaution was actually necessary. When we give an order to one of our employees, we expect him to obey it."

"Certainly, that is admitted; but was it not taking a terrible risk to start the eastward-bound train from Greenwood, with only that operator and his red light to protect it? How could the dispatcher know that he was sober? that he would carry out the order? How could he know that grim Death would not strike the operator ere he could perform his duty? I tell you, Mr. Morgan, there is something wrong here, and if that collision had happened, this company would have been responsible."

Mr. Jasper, the president, was paying the closest attention, and now exclaimed:

"By heavens! Howell, you bring up a point I had not thought of! Mr. Morgan, there must be some changes made in the order-system of this road, and that at once."

"But, gentlemen," the superintendent protested, "our system is the same as that of most single-track roads, and chances must be taken. It is not once in ten thousand times that the operator will fail to perform his duty."

"That may be true," Mr. Howell agreed, "but still there is a risk. It is exposing the lives of our patrons to danger. Now, Mr. Morgan, in what way could that order have been made absolutely safe?"

"Well," was the reply, "by holding train No. 6 at Greenwood until No. 9 had arrived at Cranston, and the conductor and engineer of that train had received orders not to pass there until No. 6 arrived. Then No. 6 could have gone on in perfect safety. But, that would have been a delay to that train. If our operators perform their duty, our present system is all right. To-night's occurrence may never happen again."

"And it may. There is a loose screw here, Mr. Morgan, and it must be tightened."

"Yes," Mr. Jasper added, "and at once. I wish you would stop at Cranston when we reach there, Mr. Morgan. I desire to see what the operator has to say about the matter."

"Just the idea!" exclaimed Mr. Howell.

"Very well, gentlemen, I will do so," the superintendent answered, and he at once gave orders to Phil Peters the conductor to that effect.

The train sped on until it reached a point where it had to take the side-track to keep out of the way of the eastward-bound Express-train, Train No. 6, against which as we have previously explained, the special had no rights; and when that train had passed, sped on again.

At Cranston the train stopped, and Mr. Jasper, Mr. Howell, Mr. Morgan and one or two others entered the office.

The operator, a very young man, thus taken by storm, became at once very much excited and nervous.

Mr. Morgan spoke first.

"Young man," he said, "you may come to my office to-morrow and get your pay. Your service is no longer required."

"I—I have already sent my resignation by telegraph, sir," the young man replied.

"I won't accept it!" Mr. Morgan thundered.

"You are discharged!"

"Very well, sir, then I turn the office over to you at once."

Despite his nervousness, the boy still had some nerve left, but Mr. Morgan rose equal to the emergency and promptly told him he could go at any moment.

Cranston was quite an important station, and the office closed would inconvenience the road not a little; but the superintendent cared nothing for that. He could not allow an employee to dictate terms to him.

"My boy," said Mr. Howell, kindly, "how came you to let that train get past your station when you had orders to hold it?"

"My red light went out," the operator replied, "and before I could light it again the train had passed."

"And have you but one red light to use?"

"That is all, sir."

"Could you not have placed a torpedo on the rail?"

"If I had had one to place there, sir."

"What! are you not supplied with such things?"

"No, sir."

Mr. Howell immediately made a note in his note-book.

"How old are you?" he next asked.

"Seventeen, sir."

"And what salary do you get?"

"Thirty-five dollars a month, sir."

"And how many hours do you work?"

"Twelve hours a night, sir, and every night in the month."

"And do you understand the full responsibility that rested upon you when you were ordered to hold that train?"

"I do, sir. I threw the lantern at the engineer's cab as the train rushed by, but missed it. I could do no more."

"And you instantly told the dispatcher?"

"I did."

"Now suppose there had been a collision, what would you have done? Run away?"

"No, sir," and the operator drew open a small drawer and revealed a pistol lying there; "this would have settled it."

"You do not mean to say that you would have killed yourself; do you?"

"I certainly would. I waited, sir, with that in my hand, to learn the result of my unintentional mishap, and I cannot tell you how happy I was when I learned that the accident had been averted."

Tears stood in the boy's eyes as he uttered the words.

"Mr. Morgan," said Mr. Jasper, "please to favor me by recalling this boy's discharge and accepting his resignation instead. I will give you my reason later."

"Very well, sir. You may thank the president, and not me, young man, for this favor. I accept your resignation. You will continue on duty here till morning."

The young operator thanked him, and then the party entered their car and went on.

"My reason for my request," said Mr. Jasper, later, "was this: That young man is no more to blame than are we, who should have placed better facilities in his hands. It is frightful, when I think of it! The idea of trusting the safety of a hundred lives to the feeble flame of a single lantern—By the heavens, it is criminal!"

"It is nothing less!" affirmed Mr. Howell. "I am astonished! Not only is it all you say, Mr. Jasper, but we intrust that 'feeble flame' to a boy seventeen years of age, whom we pay but thirty-five dollars a month, and who has to work twelve hours each night and every night in the year. It is horrible! and I shall bring the matter before the Board at our next meeting."

"And until then, Mr. Morgan," ordered the president, "please to furnish two redlights to every operator, and also a supply of torpedoes; and instruct them to use both redlights and two torpedoes whenever such an order is given them. This may seem like superfluous precaution and red-tapeism, but it is far better to be too cautious than not cautious enough. We are not blaming you in this matter, for, as you say, other single-track roads have similar rules; but now that we see our danger, we must take steps to avoid it."

"I will see that your instructions are carried out."

And so for the time the subject was dropped.

The train thundered on, passed around the big curve at Hillsdale, and in due time approached Greenwood.

Suddenly, as the train neared that station, there came a sharp sound from the whistle, and then the cars began to jog and jar as the engine was reversed and the air-brakes put on.

CHAPTER VIII.

A HORRIBLE ACCIDENT.

THE "Quickstep" had been making excellent time, and was going at a high rate of speed when approaching Greenwood.

Ralph had the right of way now, with no first-class train to think of, and was pushing ahead swiftly.

All the way along, second-class and irregular trains had been found lying on the side-tracks, keeping out of the way as they had been ordered to do.

As he was nearing the Greenwood Station, though, Ralph's eyes suddenly caught the flash of a redlight ahead in the darkness, and instantly he whistled, shut off steam, reversed and gave a little steam, and then applied the air-brakes gradually.

Speed was reduced instantly, and in a moment more the train was at a stand-still at the station.

"What is wanted?" Ralph called out to the operator.

"Important messages for the superintendent!" the operator shouted in reply, and he hastened to the car.

Phil Peters appeared at once with the same inquiry, and immediately behind him came Mr. Morgan.

The operator placed the messages into his hands.

Mr. Morgan read them hastily, and his face assumed a serious expression.

"What is wrong?" asked Mr. Jasper, as he appeared at the door of the car.

"There is a riot at Oakvale, sir," was the reply, "and the mob has set fire to our shops and freight-house. One dispatch says that some of our own employees are in the crowd."

"Can it be possible?"

"It is evidently true, and no doubt there is serious trouble ahead."

"What does the agent at Oakvale say?"

"He reports the freight-house on fire, the shops half consumed, and the crowd approaching the station. Our dispatcher says we had better approach the town with great caution, and we certainly must."

"Yes, true."

"Well, we will go on, and no doubt the excitement will have abated by the time we get there. I will tell the dispatcher to stop us again if he gets any further news."

"Yes, do so."

Mr. Morgan entered the office and wrote his messages, then came out and told Redlight Ralph what to expect at Oakvale, and the train started on.

"There's fun ter pay now, fer sure!" declared Dan Dawson, as he got up into the cab after a turn at his fire. "This here trouble has been a-brewin' fer some time."

"Yes, I know it has," answered Ralph, "and I'm afraid it is going to be serious. The mechanics, the brakemen, the firemen and some of the freight conductors are in it, I believe."

"Wonder what set up th' riot so soon?"

"I don't know; the thing remains to be found out. A strike has been talked of, and for some time, which is one reason why the president is going to Oakvale to-night."

"Be you goin' ter join 'em, Redlight?"

"Join the strikers?"

"Yes."

"No, sir."

"S'pose th' brotherhood strikes?"

"They won't strike. The engineers have nothing to strike for. Do you intend to join them?"

"No, not unless I'm ordered out."

"Then you're one of the league, are you?"

"Yes, I am. I don't mind tellin' you, but I wouldn't trust many to tell 'em."

"And if you're ordered out you will strike?"

"Yes."

"What will you strike for?"

"Well, to tell th' truth, Redlight, I don't just know what they are strikin' fer; but if th' leaders says 'strike,' why of course it must be all right."

"And that is where you are all wrong!" Ralph exclaimed emphatically.

"How so?" asked Dan.

"Do you want me to tell you?"

"Yes."

"Well, I will. In the first place, you are getting as good pay as any fireman you know of, are you not?"

"Yes, I am; but we're all gettin' little enough!"

"And your run is better than that of a great many you know of, is it not?"

"Yes, that's so."

"And your chances for promotion are now good, are they not?"

"Yes, I don't know of but two men ahead of me now."

"And you have a wife and little family who are looking forward to your promotion?"

"Y-yes, that's all so, Redlight; but—"

"But what?"

"But if I'm ordered ter strike an' don't do it, I'll be called a 'scab' and kicked out o' th' league."

"And if you do strike, you'll find it no joke to be out of work, with a family to support and winter coming on. If you take my advice you will stick to the engine. You won't lose by it. You must look out for yourself and family, and leave it to other men to do the same."

"By th' Lord Harry! Redlight," Dan cried, "I believe you're right."

"I know I am."

"An' I'm with ye. I'll stick to th' 'Quickstep,' and to th' Co."

"Good for you, Dan! You won't regret it. Shall I tell you what I know?"

"What is that?"

"This company intended making an advance in wages on the first of the new year."

"Is that so?"

"So I have heard. But now there is likely to be another cut instead. This riot at Oakvale will cost thousands of dollars. I—"

"Ding! ding!"

It was the signal-bell in the cab.

"Hello!" Ralph exclaimed, dropping the subject instantly, "Phil is pulling the cord for me to stop at the next station! I wonder what is wanted," giving two short, sharp blasts of the whistle as he spoke, to let the conductor know the signal was heard.

"Give it up!" exclaimed Dan. "What is th' next station, anyhow? Where be we?"

"We're almost to Denton."

"That station ain't open at night, is it?"

"No; and that is why I can't understand what it means."

"Well, I s'pose we'll find out when we git there."

"Yes, no doubt."

Dan got down to attend to his fire again, and the train sped on under control of the Boy Engineer's guiding hand.

When the next station was reached, the train was stopped, and Phil Peters came forward at once to the engine, while Mr. Morgan hastened to break open the office door.

"What's up, now?" Ralph asked.

"The president wants to send a message," Phil answered, "and Mr. Morgan wants you to do the telegraphing."

"S'pose I'll have to try it, then," Ralph remarked, as he wiped his hands on a bunch of waste and got down from his engine.

By this time the superintendent had forced open the door, and the three entered.

"Here is a message to be sent, Raymond," Mr. Morgan explained. "Will you send it?"

"Yes, sir," was the prompt reply.

"And you, Peters," the superintendent added, "see that your flagman goes out a good distance."

"I have sent him out, sir," was the reply. "I told him we would stop here, and to be ready to go out at once. He has started."

"All right, then."

While these words were being exchanged the Boy Engineer had found the "switch-board," and had "cut in" the instruments.

Mr. Morgan handed him the message, or more properly the messages—for there were several of them, and Ralph began at once to call the office to which they had to be sent.

While he was at work Mr. Jasper came in, soon afterward followed by his daughter and Mr. Howell.

"Ah!" Mr. Howell exclaimed at once, "our young engineer is at the key, eh?"

"Yes," Mr. Jasper responded, "and I guess he is the only one on the road who is capable of doing it. Am I right, Mr. Morgan?"

"You are," the superintendent answered, "and it is something for him to be proud of."

These remarks were not intended for the ears of Redlight Ralph, but Jeanne Jasper heard them, and a flush of pride mounted to her cheeks.

It was by this time midnight, and in an hour more, if all went well, the special train would reach its destination.

No one had thought of retiring to the sleeping-car. The excitement of the evening had banished all thoughts of sleep, and now the report of the riot at Oakvale created excitement anew.

Usually, in going out at night by special train, the party retire to the sleeping-car and remain in it in their destination station all night; but the reported riot at Oakvale made that impossible on this occasion.

When Redlight Ralph had finished sending the messages, and had also received two or three from the dispatcher addressed to the superintendent, he bade good-night to Mr. Humphrey and closed the key. Then he cut the instruments out again, and went forward to his engine, leaving it to the others to secure the office door.

Jeanne Jasper had left the office a few moments previously, and now stood near the engine, evidently, or apparently at least, admiring it.

"Are you admiring the 'Quickstep,' Miss Jasper?" Ralph inquired, as he raised his cap; and then he began to examine the pins and journals of the engine, to see whether any had become heated during the fast run.

"Yes," Jeanne answered, "I am. Are you not proud to be the master of such a machine of utility and beauty?"

"I am indeed!" Ralph exclaimed.

"And are you not afraid, when rushing ahead into such almost impenetrable darkness?"

"Not in the least," the young engineer replied, smiling. "Were you afraid, when you were looking ahead so intently from the cars?"

"No," was the low-spoken answer, "I was not; I trusted you too fully to fear alarm."

Once again their eyes met in love.

"Thank you," Ralph said. "I am always careful, and to-night, if possible, I am more cautious than ever before. No accident that can be foreseen shall happen, I promise."

"All-aboard!" sung out Phil Peters at that moment, and with a hasty "good-night" Jeanne ran back and entered the car, and Ralph sprung up on his engine.

Blowing the whistle to call in the flagman, then, and soon getting a signal from him to start, Redlight Ralph pulled the throttle once more and the train glided on its way.

An hour later, when Oakvale was just in sight, there came a sudden scream from the whistle, a sudden shock denoting that the engine had been suddenly reversed and the brakes put on, and the next instant, with a terrible crash, both cars left the track and went rolling down a steep embankment.

CHAPTER IX.

AT THE SCENE OF DEATH.

By this time the storm had broke in all its fury, and the night was a terrible one indeed. The rain was falling in torrents, and the wind was rising.

Redlight Ralph had been running very fast, and when he came in sight of Oakvale he was just on the point of reducing his speed when the accident happened.

The place where it occurred was about two miles from Oakvale, on a high embankment.

The road at that point made a sharp curve as it came out of a deep cut in the hills, and then the embankment led away for half a mile or more at a down grade.

When Ralph came out of the cut and around the curve he glanced toward the direction of the town, where usually many lights could be seen.

And there were lights enough to be seen there now.

Several fires were burning, though evidently now greatly reduced by the rain.

One glance in that direction, and then, as his engine left the curve and started down the straight line, Ralph shoved in the throttle and gave the brakes a little hold.

The next instant he reversed, gave a sharp whistle, and put the air on with full force.

Right ahead he had noticed a break in the track where his headlight fell, and knew that one of the rails was out of place!

The next instant all was over.

Being on a straight line, as stated, the engine most fortunately crossed the break and mounted safely to the rails again, but the cars, less fortunate, went off the track and down the embankment.

It was a horrible accident.

The engine was almost instantly stopped, after it mounted to the rails, and then, with faces pale as death, the engineer and fireman jumped down.

"My God! this is frightful!" Redlight Ralph cried. "It is horrible!"

There at the foot of the embankment the two cars lay, plainly visible in the light of the flames which were already beginning to dart forth from the interior of one of them, and the groans and cries of the unfortunate persons in them were frightful to hear.

One car, the sleeper, lay upon its back, and the other was lying on its side.

"Heavens! what's ter be done?" gasped Dan, the fireman.

This roused Ralph to instant action.

"Take your red light," he ordered, "and run back around the curve as quick as you can, and stop whatever comes along. I will see what help I can render here."

"All right!" cried Dan, and he sprung to obey while Ralph hastened down the bank.

Phil Peters and Mr. Morgan had just got out of the burning car, and were assisting Mr. Jasper to get through a window, while at another window Lyman Lambert was just crawling out.

These were but little hurt.

The flagman, too, was uninjured, and came around from the other side of the car, he having been in the rear end of the sleeper.

Redlight Ralph saw him, and said:

"I've sent Dan out to flag. You go up to the engine and get my ax, and be quick."

As he spoke, Ralph was climbing up to the side

of the car, the side being now uppermost, to lend his assistance.

And the first one to whom he lent it was Lyman Lambert.

Him he laid hold of and helped to get out, and then reached his hand down to Mrs. Jasper, who proved to be another of the uninjured and fortunate ones.

"Oh! but you shall answer for this!" Mr. Lambert cried, as he moved about excitedly on the side of the car; "you shall pay for this carelessness! It was all your fault!"

"That will be talked of later," said Ralph, as coolly as possible under the circumstances. "Will you lend me a little assistance to get Mrs. Jasper out?"

Mrs. Jasper was not by any means a small woman.

Lambert, however, was too excited to know anything, and still threatening what he would do, moved away.

Phil Peters came to Ralph's assistance, and Mrs. Jasper and one other lady were safely taken out.

The others, it was feared, must be dead or badly injured.

The flagman had now brought an ax, and with it Mr. Morgan, who had jumped to the ground, began to cut a hole through the roof of the car.

Meanwhile the flame within was increasing, and the screams of the injured were full of horror.

The instant Redlight Ralph had assisted the two ladies mentioned, he hurried along the car toward the end where the fire was raging, looking eagerly down to catch the face of her he loved.

At that instant there came a cry from Lyman Lambert.

"Oh! my God!" he cried, "will somebody come and help me to rescue Miss Jasper? Oh! she is doomed! Oh! oh!"

Thus he exclaimed, as, standing over one of the windows near the fire, he looked down, wringing his hands like some great baby.

At the name of Miss Jasper, Redlight Ralph was at his side in a bound.

Looking down he beheld a sight that chilled his blood.

There lay Jeanne Jasper, securely imprisoned by one of the seats, her eyes closed in unconsciousness and the fire almost at her feet.

"Why didn't you rush to her rescue, instead of standing and shouting?" the Boy Engineer demanded fiercely, and pushing Lambert out of his way he broke one of the windows with his heel and sprung down into the car.

The heat was intense, but Ralph's clothes were wet through with the rain.

Laying hold of the seat that held Miss Jasper prisoner, he gave it a mighty wrench and tore it from its fastenings, and then picked up the slender girl and carried her toward the other end of the car.

While doing so she opened her eyes.

"Oh! what has happened?" she gasped, and then as she saw where she was, and in whose arms, she exclaimed:

"Now I remember! And, oh! it was so terrible to lie there and see the flames burning toward me! But I knew you would save me, if you had escaped alive."

"Yes," Ralph responded, as, stepping carefully across the windows, he pressed her to his breast, "I would go through fire itself to save you, because—"

"Because what?" she whispered. "Tell me why."

"Because I love you!"

A smile swept over the pretty face, a glad light shone in the beautiful eyes, and the ripe lips responded:

"And I love you."

They were near the end of the car now, and were met by Phil Peters and Mr. Morgan, who had just succeeded in tearing a hole through the roof.

Ralph assisted Jeanne out, and her father caught her to his breast at once.

"My child, are you hurt?" he cried.

"No, I guess not," was the reply; "and thanks to our brave engineer, I escaped the flames. I was held fast under one of the seats."

"Thank Heaven you are safe! That brave boy shall be rewarded!"

Mrs. Jasper caught her daughter in her arms, then, and showered kisses and tears upon her freely.

Lyman Lambert now approached them, and said:

"How thankful I am, Jeanne, that you are not hurt!" and he attempted to take her hand.

"Pray do not trouble yourself about me, Mr. Lambert," the girl responded, coldly.

"Why are you not rendering assistance to those who are less fortunate?"

The man's face flushed, and with a frown he retorted:

"It is for our 'servants' to do that. It is what they are paid for. I might be in the way of some 'hero' whose services are of more value than mind would be."

"True; I did not pause to think of that. Pray do not get in the way, whatever you do. It is fortunate we have some heroes to rescue us."

"Yes, especially a careless engineer who is responsible for our misfortune."

"I do not believe he is," Jeanne exclaimed, warmly. "He—"

But she said no more, stopping suddenly and shortly, and with a contemptuous gesture turned her back toward him.

With that cut Lambert turned away.

His teeth were hard set, and his hands clinched, and he muttered:

"Curse the young hound! I will ruin him or I will kill him, if my money and position can do it. I can see that they love each other, and I shall put old Jasper on his guard. The girl is just silly enough to refuse me and run off with this upstart. Curse him!"

The other men were working like beavers to save those still in the car.

The fire was not so fierce now, the heat within and the rain without having broken the windows, thus admitting the rain; but the rain could not reach all parts of the car, and it was clear that most of the interior at least would be consumed.

Mr. Howell had been rescued, and it was found that he had sustained serious injuries, having both legs broken.

The body of one other of the directors, who had been killed instantly, was found, and also the body of one brakeman.

These were the only ones killed.

Two of the ladies were hurt, one having both arms broken.

The others were all more or less cut and bruised, but in the presence of death such hurts as these were hardly thought of.

After considerable of hard work all were taken out of the car, and all were cared for as well as possible under the circumstances.

The sleeping-car, as we have stated, was lying on its back. The trucks had been torn from under it, and its roof was badly broken.

Mr. Morgan, upon examining its position, thought that it might be turned over and used as a shelter until help could be sent for.

This was tried, and with but little effort the car was rolled over and placed in its natural position.

Into this, then, the wounded were carried, and there the ladies sought shelter from the storm.

It was now a sad-hearted party indeed.

When all had been done that could be done, Redlight Ralph sought the flagman and sent him to find and relieve his fireman from that duty, and then went up to his engine.

There Mr. Morgan and Phil Peters soon joined him, and for the first time the cause of the accident was looked into.

It was found that a rail had been removed from its place, and evidently by some person who understood how to do such work, for the spikes had been drawn and the fish-plates removed, and near by lay a claw-bar and a wrench.

The rail was lying near.

Just then a whistle was heard around the curve, and soon a headlight came in sight.

It had been a whistle calling for brakes, and the train—a freight-train—came on to the scene of the accident and stopped.

Dan Dawson had gone out far enough with his red light to give plenty of distance for any train to stop in.

The superintendent at once directed the engineer of the freight-train to sound the whistle-signal for the flagman of that train to go back, which unhappily is seldom done half promptly enough when a train stops; and then he ordered Phil and Ralph to run on to Oakvale, procure medical aid, and return as quickly as possible, bringing a passenger-car with them.

"I will hold all trains here," he said in conclusion, and Dan, the fireman, coming up at that moment, Redlight Ralph started.

CHAPTER X.

AN ALARMING MISHAP.

MR. MORGAN, then, with the assistance of the men of the freight-train, put the displaced rail into position and spiked it fast.

Then he, the superintendent, and Mr. Jasper

had a talk concerning who had been the wretch to do the heinous act.

"No, sir," Mr. Morgan declared most emphatically, "I do not believe we have a man in our employ who would be guilty of so heartless a deed."

"But, Morgan," Mr. Jasper persisted, "here are the claw-bar and wrench. How do you account for their being here?"

"They may have been stolen."

"Yes, that is true; but who would know where they are kept?"

"Oh! they are kept in the regular tool-box at the end of each section; no secret whatever. Anybody could break a box open and get them."

"Well, it *may* have been an outsider, but I am inclined to lay it to the strikers."

"And you may be right; I merely speak my opinion."

"Look yonder at Oakvale! See what our trusted employees are doing for us there! They are giving us fire and destruction."

"Again I must defend my men, sir. I do not believe it is they who are the leaders of the riot."

"Well, I hope they are not, at any rate."

While they were talking they were standing a little apart from the others, now having on their waterproof coats which they had saved from the wreck.

Presently there was a stir of excitement among the men near the engine.

What could be going on?

They turned in that direction to learn what was the cause of the commotion.

When they drew near they beheld, in the light of the lanterns and torches, two rough-looking men, apparently farmers, who were holding a third man between them.

The third man was a villainous-appearing fellow. His low and retreating forehead, and generally evil cast of countenance, stamped him at once as a low-born wretch.

"Whom have you here?" asked Mr. Morgan.

"He's th' man what done th' mischief to th' track," one of the captors replied.

"Ho-ho! and how did you get him?"

"Why, I'll tell ye, sir. Ye see, me an' my son was goin' home from a sick neighbor's, goin' along th' road down there," pointing down the embankment on the side opposite where the wrecked cars lay, "when we heard a noise up here on the track."

"Tom," sez I, "what be goin' on up there in th' dark?"

"I don't know," sez Tom.

"There be awful doin's at Oakvale," sez I; "mebbe they're doin' of somethin' to th' track."

"Like as not, dad," sez Tom; "s'pose we sneak up th' bank an' see."

"Come on," sez I, an' we did.

"Well, when we got to th' top we was just in time to see this rascal a-runnin' away, an' we started after him."

"Did you notice what he had been doing?" interrupted Mr. Morgan.

"Yes, sir. We see'd that he'd took one of th' irons out."

"Then why didn't one of you stay to warn trans of the danger?"

"Bless ye, we didn't think on't! Not bein' railroad men, an' havin' no sort o' way to make a light, we wouldn't 'a' knowed how ter do it anyhow."

"Well, go on."

"Well, ye see me an' Tom we knows th' lay of th' land round here, an' we kept after th' feller, dark as it was, till we run him down. That was nigh onto a mile away. An' jest as we got our grabbers onto him, an' made him prisoner, we heard th' awful screechin' of th' loky an' then heard th' crash. Then we started right back here, an' here we be."

"Tain't so!" the prisoner snarled. "They've got th' wrong man!"

"No, sir!" cried the farmer, "you're th' right man! We know him, sir," to Mr. Morgan.

"You know him!" exclaimed both the superintendent and the president in one breath.

"Yes, sir."

"And who is he?"

"Why, his name is Tim Flinn, an' he used to work on th' track."

The prisoner growled out something about revenge, but Mr. Morgan cut him short.

"Are you an employee of this road?" he demanded.

"Naw, I ain't," was the surly reply.

"But, this farmer says you are."

"I said he *used* to work on th' track," the farmer corrected. "He was discharged some days ago fer bein' drunk."

"An' I've heard said," added the farmer's son, "that he swore revenge."

"Ah-ha! this brings the crime right home to you, my man! Do you know the result of your work? It is *death!* and you will hang for it as surely as you stand here. Men, bind him, hand and foot."

At the mention of the awful result of his evil deed, the rascal's face grew white. His limbs trembled under him, and he began to beg for mercy. But he might as well have appealed to men of stone.

In a few moments he was securely bound.

Thus the mystery of the accident was fully explained, and the stigma of suspicion removed from the strikers.

Mr. Morgan took care to take down the names of the farmer and his son, and inquire where they lived, and then they were allowed to depart, with a promise of reward for their services.

But the interest of our story centers upon Redlight Ralph, and him we must follow.

As soon as he started from the scene of the accident, his fireman and Phil Peters with him, he turned to Phil and said:

"Phil, we are going into a hornets' nest now."

"I know it, Redlight," was the response, "and hang me if I like it. I'm afraid if they get us down there they won't let us out again."

"That is just what we must guard against. We have got to go back, and take a car and a doctor with us."

"Yes, you're right; it has got to be done."

Ralph was running slowly now. He had no desire to encounter another misplaced—or, more properly displaced—rail.

"And now is the time for us to plan how to do it. It will not do to wait till we get there, trusting wholly to chance."

"That's where your head is level, my boy. Can you suggest anything?"

"I reckon I can, Phil, if I bend my mind to it."

"Well, bend it then, and let's hear from you."

"In the first place, hadn't we better put out our headlight?"

"What for?"

"So they can't see us come in."

"Good idea! Yes, by all means."

"All right. Dan, just go out there and put it out, will you?"

The fireman started to obey.

"You see," Ralph added to Phil, "if the headlight is out we can sneak in silently and may not be seen."

"You are right."

"Then the first thing to be done is to get hold of a car. Do you know where there is one standing?"

"When I came out from Oakvale early this morning, there was one in the upper end of the yard. It may be there yet."

"All right; anyhow, we can look for it."

"Yes."

"Then when once we have found it we can pull out of the side-track and wait for the doctor on the main line, at a little distance above the switch. This will prevent their throwing any switch behind us to keep us there."

"Correct again."

"Of course you will have to be the one to go for the doctor, Phil, and while you are gone Dan and I will try to get out the car."

"Yes, that will fall to me, and you must do your best to get the car and keep out of trouble. You can let me off at the very first street-crossing when we enter the town, and wait there for me after you get the car."

"All right. And in case the mob gets the better of us, and we can't get out again, we shall have to dust around and get teams and wagons to go to the rescue of those up at the wreck. But, we *will* get out; that is not to be thought of except as a very last resort."

With this understanding they went on, silently and carefully, with their headlight now extinguished.

They had the right of way, of course, and Mr. Morgan was holding the freight-train at the scene of the accident in order to give them the right of road back to that point.

When they entered the town Ralph showed up at the first street-crossing, as agreed, and Phil got off and hurried away in quest of a doctor.

Ralph continued on, then, running slowly until he came to the first switch at the upper end of the yard, where he stopped.

A short distance further on the shouts of the crowd could be heard, and hundreds of men could be seen moving about in the dim light of the now almost consumed station.

The timely rain had evidently saved a greater destruction by fire, though it was great enough as it was.

Having stopped, Ralph directed the fireman to get off and look around for a car.

Dan obeyed, and in a few moments came back and reported that there was one just a short distance ahead of where they stood, on the side-track.

"All right," said Ralph, "we will take the first one we can get. Here, take this key and open the switch, and lock it open."

Dan took the key and obeyed, and in a moment ran back to the engine and told the young engineer to "come ahead."

Ralph started, and in a few moments more had his engine coupled fast to a passenger car.

"Is the car cut loose from the others in the siding?" he called out to Dan in a low voice.

"Yes, back up," came the reply and direction in one.

Ralph did so, and in a short time the car and engine were safely out of the side-track and the switch was set up again and locked.

So far all had gone well.

Backing up to the street-crossing, the Boy Engineer stopped there, and nothing remained to be done but wait for the conductor to return with the doctor, if he could find one.

"We're all O. K. so far, Redlight," said Dan, as he got up into the cab. "I guess we'll git out o' here without any trouble after all."

"I hope so, anyhow," responded Ralph. "I wish Phil would make haste with a doctor. Assistance is badly needed up there at the wreck. I suppose he will have some difficulty in finding one willing to venture out, though, with all this trouble going on. This has been a terrible trip for us, and—Good Heavens!" The exclamation was drowned in a loud, sonorous and spiteful hiss of steam from the steam-dome.

Not a thought had been given to the fact that the engine was likely to "blow off" at any moment, and thus make their presence known, and now that very thing had happened.

Instantly Ralph tried the "gauges" and turned on both "injectors," while Dan opened the fire-box door an inch or two, but it was too late, for the alarm had been given.

In a few minutes a great shouting was heard, and soon numerous lights were seen, and then came the crowd toward the engine, an excited and angry mob.

CHAPTER XI.

AT PISTOL'S POINT.

"GINGER blue!" exclaimed Dan Dawson, "what's to be done now, Redlight?"

"We've got to fight!" Ralph answered.

"It won't be no sort o' use; there's too many of 'em fer us to tackle. They'll eat us up. They'll yank us off o' this engine in jest two twinklin's."

"Not if you will stand by me they won't," Ralph returned firmly, and as he spoke he opened the box under his seat in the cab and drew out a revolver, a large one and of the best kind.

"Lord! I never knowed you had *that* thing in there!" cried Dan in surprise.

"No, nor anybody else. I have it all the same, though, and I will use it if it is necessary, too."

"Well, that changes matters quite some. I guess none of 'em will banker fer a taste o' that. I'm with ye, Redlight, from th' word 'go'!" and the fireman armed himself at once with a heavy wrench.

This exchange of words occupied but a few brief seconds of time.

In a moment the assailants were at hand.

"Come down off o' that engine!" the foremost cried. "Not another wheel is to be turned here till this thing is settled!"

"That's what's th' matter!" echoed the others. "Come down, boys, or by heavens we'll pull ye down! We mean biz, you bet!"

"Why!" the foremost instantly added, "it is Redlight Ralph and Dan Dawson! Dan is one of us, anyhow!"

"Hurrah! Come down, Dan!"

Two or three attempted to get up on the engine then, but Ralph presented his revolver at them, and cried:

"Hold on, boys! Don't climb up here, or you will regret it!"

"Same this side!" shouted Dan.

This checked the ardor of the crowd for a moment.

But a moment was all.

"A scab! a scab!" was quickly shouted. "Dan Dawson is a scab!"

"Stand firm, Dan!" said Redlight Ralph, in encouraging tones: "remember what I told you. I will get a chance to speak to the crowd in a minute."

"Not a scab," shouted some one, "but a traitor! Down with traitors!"

"Down with him!"

"Down with both of 'em!"

Redlight Ralph watched them from the window of the cab, still holding his revolver in sight to hold them at bay.

He saw that the railroad men in the crowd were outnumbered ten to one.

In fact, he saw but few faces he knew. All the others, or nearly all, were faces of idlers, tramps and evil rascals such as are ever ready to lead a mob or riot at any and all times.

The railroad men gradually worked their way to the front, but most of them were more or less in liquor.

Ralph was quick to form an opinion of the terrible state of affairs existing there.

The riot and incendiarism, he believed, were much more the work of the idlers than of the strikers.

"Come, Redlight Ralph!" cried the one who had first called Ralph's name, a fireman, "git right down, now, and give up yer engine, or by blazes we will use force!"

"An' you too, Dan Dawson!" shouted another, "git right down and save trouble. We don't want ter be rough with ye, but we'll have ter be if ye don't come ter time mighty sudden."

There was a brief pause then, and the Boy Engineer shouted:

"If you will listen to me, boys, I would like to say a few words."

"Say ahead," was the instant cry; "let's hear what ye've got ter talk about."

"There's been an accident up there at Big Fill."

"An accident at Big Fill! What is it?"

"Somebody took out a rail, and when I came along there a short time ago, with a special train with President Jasper and his party, the train went off the track and down the embankment."

"Anybody hurt?" inquired one of the railroad boys.

"Yes; two killed and several others badly hurt. I have come on here to get this car and a doctor. You won't try to hold me here till after the dead and wounded are cared for, will you? There are several ladies among them."

"No," answered one, "we won't stop ye till after ye come back. That wouldn't be right; hey, boys?"

"Yes it would be right, too!" shouted another, a villainous-looking tramp. "Let 'em die if they wants ter. What does th' president care for us? He's rollin' in wealth; we're ground down to th' dust. Let 'em suffer! Let 'em git a taste of th' bitter side o' life once!"

"That's the idee!" cried others; "let 'em know what hard knocks is!"

"That won't do, boys," declared Ralph. "I have come here to get help, and by heavens I'm not going to back down. Do you know what the suspicion is?"

"No, nor we don't care! What is it?"

"Well, it is suspected that you strikers took up that rail, and if you did there's blood on your hands!"

"We didn't do it!" cried two or three of the sober ones, whom Ralph knew. "It is no work of ours!"

"I am afraid you will have to prove that. It is a serious thing for somebody to answer for. If I am detained here it will make it look all the worse for you, too."

By this time several more of the more sober of the railroad men had crowded to the front, and there were some whom Ralph knew well.

"What's that has got to be answered for?" the new-comers demanded. "What has been done?"

Ralph explained again.

"That can't be laid at our door!" one of them exclaimed earnestly. "We are not in that line of business! It is like this fire-bug work here at Oakvale. If we could only find out who is at th' head of such work, by heavens we'd lynch him."

"It is not your work, then?" Ralph queried.

"No," was the answer, "it is not! We have been fighting fire like demons. This riot work don't belong to our crowd."

"Well, will you let me go back to work in peace?"

"Yes, we will; we—"

"No, we won't!"

This latter cry came from the opposite side of the engine.

"Well," declared Ralph, "I am going, anyhow! If I have to fight my way out, I shall not hesitate to shoot!"

"Yes, let him go," the sober and level-headed

ones advised. "We must do all we can to clear ourselves of the charge of taking out that rail. Besides, we are not the men to refuse to help wounded men and women, are we?"

"No! no!"

"This engine can't go a foot!" cried others.

"If one moves they'll all move! What do we care for old Jasper and his tribe? What do they care for us? Let 'em die! Didn't he send us word that we might go to thunder?"

"When did he send that word?"

It was Redlight Ralph who put the question.

"He sent it early in th' evenin'," was the reply. "We're white men, we are, jest as white as he is; and if he says we can go to thunder, so may he!"

"That's th' talk! Three cheers fer our side!"

As soon as he could make himself heard, Ralph shouted:

"It is a lie! The president never sent any such word! He and some of the directors were coming here to-night, and they intended to meet you to-morrow. They had good news for you, too."

"What was th' news?"

"It is not for me to tell you; but I am sure no such word was sent. Have you tried to get proof of it?"

"What more proof do we want? Everybody knows it, and everybody says it is so!"

"That's a weak argument."

"Well, we don't care a red cent anyhow! We want Dan Dawson, now, and we're goin' ter have him! He shan't turn scab if we kin help it!"

"Ye can't have him!" cried Dan. "Dan Dawson is no fool, and he is no brute! He's not going to leave poor wounded women to die fer want of help. After our duty is done, then we will be ready ter talk business with ye. Hold on! if ye try to git up here I'll split your head! You're no railroad man!"

One of the rough-looking tramps had made the attempt to get aboard the engine, but, as Dan raised his wrench he gave up and fell back in the crowd.

"How many are willing to let me go back in peace?" Ralph asked.

Ten or twelve hands were raised at once.

"Get aboard and go with me, then. We are brothers of the rail; and we must do our duty to the injured. If you refuse to help them, how can you expect the company to listen to you?"

"Redlight Ralph is right," was the shout of the few, and at once they crowded to the steps of the engine and got aboard.

Others tried to follow, others whom the young engineer knew were not railroad men at all, and at once he presented his pistol again and held them back.

At that moment the fireman touched him on the shoulder and pointed back over the tender to a light some distance up the track.

It was the light of a lantern, and it was signaling him to "back up."

Ralph jumped at once to the correct conclusion that it was Phil Peters. Seeing the crowd around the engine on his return, he had made his way up the track a little distance.

Ralph sounded the whistle-signal to back, and Dan rung the bell, thus giving warning to the crowd to stand clear, and then Ralph pulled the throttle.

The engine started backward at once, but there was a sudden "clang!" as the heavy bar dropped down upon the pilot, and the car remained motionless.

Some one had pulled the pin and uncoupled the engine from the car.

With an angry imprecation Ralph shut off steam instantly and stopped.

"Here, Dan," he ordered, "take hold of the throttle and move ahead slowly. I'll see if I can't couple up again."

Dan got over to the right-hand side and took the throttle, and Ralph, with his revolver in hand, stepped out upon the running-board and passed along to the steam-chest and thence to the pilot.

"Get away from here," he ordered, "or I will shoot! I will stand no fooling!"

As the engine was moving forward, the men hastily stepped from between it and the car, and taking his revolver in his teeth, Ralph lifted the bar and made the coupling.

"All right!" he shouted to Dan; "back up!" and the fireman obeyed at once.

The men on the car, however, had put on the brakes, and the car was not easy to pull.

This Ralph discovered as soon as Dan opened the throttle, and catching hold of the frame of the headlight with his left hand, he leaned forward and thrust his revolver almost into the

face of a man who was standing near the brake, saying:

"My friend, will you please let off that brake?"

The man was so surprised and startled that he obeyed instantly.

Then Ralph ordered the platform of the car cleared, and his manner was such as to admit of no hesitation. The men got off from both sides at once.

As soon as they were off, the young engineer stepped across from the pilot to the car, and having a key, unlocked the door and entered.

It was fortunate the car was locked, or it would have been full of the tramps and loafers, who, as we have said, formed the larger portion of the mob.

Closing and locking the door behind him, Ralph hurried through to the other end, opened that door and cleared the platform at pistol's point, and then let off the brake at that end of the car.

CHAPTER XII.

RALPH TO THE DEFENSE.

In their haste to get off, one of the men had not stopped to pick up a lantern belonging to him, but left it standing on the platform near the brake.

Redlight Ralph picked it up at once, and with it signaled to the fireman to continue backing.

Dan answered the signal with three short "toots" of the whistle, and increased the speed of the engine.

In a few moments they reached the place where the other lantern, the one first seen, was still signaling, and there Ralph signaled to stop.

The holder of the lantern was indeed Phil Peters, and with him was a doctor.

"This way, Phil!" called Ralph, from the rear platform, and in a moment the conductor and the doctor were aboard.

"Who is handling the engine?" Phil asked at once.

"Dan has charge," Ralph answered, "and I am playing conductor. The mob cut the car loose and put on the brakes, and I had to couple up and let them off. I tell you we had a little excitement. You take charge now, and I'll go back to the engine."

"All right. Who are all the men on the engine though?"

"Why, they are strikers. I found they were in favor of helping us at the wreck, and told them to get aboard."

Ralph hastened out of the car then, and over to the cab, and took his place at the throttle.

Then with a long scream of the whistle she started for the scene of the accident.

"So," he remarked to those in the cab, "you know nothing about that displaced rail, eh?"

"Not a thing," was the earnest reply. "If it was done by a striker, we do not know who it was; but we do not believe it was a striker. We are not murderers!"

"And you say you are not responsible for the fires at Oakvale?"

"So we say and so we mean. We have been fighting like dogs to save the company's property. If we find the miserable cur, by heavens we will lynch him!"

"I saw a great many hang-dog faces in the crowd with you," Ralph declared.

"I know it, and by heavens they try to take the lead in our affairs!"

"There's a way to stop them."

"How is that?"

"Go to your lodge-room and stay there, or if not there, go home. Then whatever depredation is done, it cannot be laid to you."

"That's sound advice," declared Dan, the fireman.

"and Redlight Ralph knows what he is talkin' about. As for me, boys, I am out of this muss, scab or no scab."

"You're out of it!" exclaimed two or three other firemen.

"Yes, I am! I'm on a lay fer myself an' my family, not for a mob like that at Oakvale. This engine is my headquarters, an' here I'm goin' ter hold out."

"What's put that into yer head? You ain't goin' back on us, be ye?"

"I ain't goin' back on my wife and babies, that's sure. Common sense put th' idee into my head, common sense from Redlight Ralph here. I ain't goin' back on you, neither, fer to-morrow I am goin' ter get Redlight ter make a speech fer ye, if he will, an' tell ye th' same things he's told me, only a good deal more. Will ye do it, Redlight?"

Ralph blushed like a schoolboy.

"I will do so," he answered, "if I am asked, although I never attempted such a thing as a speech in my life."

"Well, I'll see that you're asked then," declared Dan, and so the matter was dropped.

In a short time they arrived at the scene of the accident.

The rain had now abated considerably, though the storm still continued.

The fire in the one car was out, though it had continued until the whole interior was destroyed, and in the other car—the sleeper—the party were gathered—now a sad party indeed.

The moment Ralph stopped, the men sprung down from the engine, and the conductor led the doctor at once to the car where the wounded were.

Mr. Howell and the two ladies who were injured

were cared for first, and with all the skill possible under the circumstances.

Meantime, as soon as the strikers got down from the engine, they were met by Mr. Morgan and Mr. Jasper.

"Are you some of the strikers?" the superintendent demanded.

"We are, sir," answered one of the men, "and we have come up here to tell you that we are not responsible for *this* work," indicating the accident, "and to render whatever assistance we can. We are on a strike, but we are doing no damage to person or property."

"No damage!" exclaimed Mr. Jasper, "what do you call your work at Oakvale? Is it no damage to burn our shops and other buildings?"

"Neither is *that* our work, sir. We have done all in our power to save the company's property."

"That is strange, and it does not at all agree with the reports we have received."

"It is the truth, sir."

"Well, even if you did not set the fires yourselves you are responsible for them."

"How so, sir?"

"Why, if there had been no strike there would be no riot."

"Our striking had nothing to do with the riot. The riot was more *your* fault, sir."

"My fault! How can it be my fault?"

"Did you not send word to the men that they could go to thunder?"

"No, sir, I did not! Who says I did?"

"Why, everybody says so."

"It is not so! And by heavens I will know who started such a report."

"Do you believe us then, sir, when we say we are not responsible for this accident?"

"Yes, I do; and on the strength of proof of your innocence in this, I am inclined to believe your whole story."

"And so am I," declared Mr. Morgan. "You know what I told you, Mr. Jasper."

"Yes, I remember."

"Do you say, Mr. Morgan, that you have *proof* that the strikers did not remove the rail?" asked Redlight Ralph.

"Yes, we have proof."

"What is it?" asked the strikers as one man.

"We have the man who did it," the superintendent answered.

"Who is it?" with excitement.

"It is one Tim Flinn, who used to work on the track."

"Oh! the murderer! Where is he?" and in an instant the strikers became like demons seeking vengeance.

The prisoner had been placed in the car next to the engine of the freight-train.

"We have made him prisoner," was the answer of the superintendent. "and we will take him to Oakvale and lodge him in jail."

"No you won't, sir, for we will hang him! Where is he? Let us give him quick justice at the end of a bell-rope!"

"No, no, my men," Mr. Jasper interposed, "you must let the law deal with him. You have no right to harm him, no matter what his crime be."

"But we're goin' ter *take* th' right!" another striker cried. "No murderer kin run trains off th' track an' kill folks on this road, an' we run th' risk of bein' blamed for it; not much! We want that man, an' we're goin' ter have him!"

"No, men!" protested Mr. Morgan, "you are wrong. You must let the law deal with him, as Mr. Jasper says. If you lynch him, you will only make yourselves out criminals in the eye of the law, and you will be dealt with severely."

"That is so, boys," added Redlight Ralph. "You must not undertake to harm him. I do not say that he does not deserve all you would give him, but you must not do it; the law must take its course."

It was some time before the angry men could be brought to listen to reason, but at last they were pacified, and then all set to work to remove the dead and wounded from the wrecked car at the bottom of the bank to the car on the track.

The dead were carried up first and placed in one end of the car, where the bodies were covered with sheets from the wrecked sleeper. Then the wounded were brought and made as comfortable as possible in the other end, where they were cared for tenderly by those who had been so fortunate as to escape injury.

In a reasonable length of time the work was done, and leaving one of the men of the freight-train to watch the wrecked cars, (which he did by crawling into a bed in the sleeper and going to sleep,) and others to signal trains and warn them of the bad place in the track, the party went on to Oakvale, the freight-train following carefully.

Mr. Morgan and Phil Peters were the only men on the "Quickstep" besides Ralph and Dan, all the others being now in the car, and pushing the car ahead of them as they were now doing, they advanced carefully, the flagman standing on the front platform of the car to signal them ahead.

"Where had we better stop, Mr. Morgan?" Phil asked.

"Well," Mr. Morgan decided, "I suppose it makes little difference where we stop. We must look for trouble anywhere, and be prepared for it. Run to the crossing the nearest to the Grand Hotel and stop there. We have decided to go to that house."

"All right, sir," said Ralph, "I will stop there."

"And you, Peters, you must go at once for a conveyance to take the wounded to the hotel. Start as soon as we stop, and we will remain in the car till you return."

When they entered the town they heard the wild shouts of the mob all along the track, and particularly at the crossings, and when they stopped the crowd surrounded the car at once.

Phil Peters started immediately for conveyances, and during his absence the car was kept dark and locked.

The mob increased in body and in noise, and it was feared that an attack would be made upon the car, though the friendly strikers defended it at each end with their presence.

In due time the conductor returned with two large barouches from the hotel, and the dead and wounded were taken from the car and placed in one of them.

At first the sight of the dead seemed to appall the mob, but as soon as the first conveyance started they began to demonstrate evil intent toward the others, and an attack was feared.

The ladies were hurried out of the car and toward the waiting barouche, but ere they reached it the rough mob made a desperate charge.

Redlight Ralph, not expecting such an act as this, had not left his engine, but now, revolver in hand, he sprang down to rush to the defense of the girl he loved—pretty Jeanne Jasper.

CHAPTER X.II.

JEANNE JASPER MISSING.

It was a moment of danger as well as one of great excitement.

The mob acted more like a horde of wild savages than like civilized beings. They hurled stones at the car and engine, and nearly all the windows of both were broken, in a moment's time.

This was clearly not the work of the striking employees.

At the moment when Redlight Ralph sprang down from his engine, Mrs. Jasper and Jeanne had just started, behind the others, from the car to the carriage.

Mr. Jasper and Mr. Morgan were trying to protect Mrs. Jasper, while Phil Peters sprang to assist Lyman Lambert in performing the same duty for Jeanne.

"Come, Miss Jasper," Lambert was saying, "pray hasten, or we shall be killed."

"Run on, if you are afraid," Jeanne responded; "I am making all the haste I can."

"N—no," stammered the young director; "it is not my own safety I am thinking of, but *yours*."

"Well, assist me then, and say nothing."

"Please take my arm," said Phil, as he offered it to her; "we are in a terrible crowd."

"Thank you," and Jeanne slipped her arm through that of the old conductor, while on the other side Lyman Lambert had hold of hers with his hand.

The next moment, as Redlight Ralph was making his way toward them, he saw a stone strike Phil on the head, and saw him reel and fall to the ground. Then several of the most evil looking men in the crowd pressed forward upon Jeanne and her frightened protector, and parted them, Lambert being pushed one way and the girl being forcibly dragged another.

Lambert made a show of resistance for a moment, till some one struck him a light blow in the face, when he turned, ran to the carriage and clambered in.

Redlight Ralph saw nothing of that, however. His eyes were upon Jeanne, and in his eagerness to reach her side he knocked men out of his way right and left.

But the fates were against him. The crowd seemed to press before him like a solid wall, and in a moment the girl had been forced around the end of the car and out of sight in the darkness.

Redlight Ralph saw nothing of that, however. His eyes were upon Jeanne, and in his eagerness to reach her side he knocked men out of his way right and left.

But the fates were against him. The crowd seemed to press before him like a solid wall, and in a moment the girl had been forced around the end of the car and out of sight in the darkness.

Ralph then turned to get around the other way and give pursuit, when suddenly a heavy blow fell upon his head and he was knocked senseless.

When he recovered he was on his engine, and Dan Dawson and one or two others were bending over him.

"Thank th' Lord he's alive, anyhow!" Dan exclaimed fervently as Ralph opened his eyes.

At first Ralph could not realize what had happened, and his mind reverted in a dazed way to his narrow escape from collision with the stock-train some hours previously.

"Was anybody killed?" he asked.

"No, I guess not," answered Dan, "but poor Phil is pretty badly hurt, an' they've sent him to the hospital."

"That's too bad. Are we off the track? and is the engine damaged much?"

"Thunder! you're off your nut, Redlight, sure! We ain't had no smash-up; we're here at Oakvale. You got a crack in the riot."

It all came back like a flash now, and Ralph was upon his feet in an instant.

"How long have I been unconscious?" he demanded.

"About twenty minutes, I reckon."

"And is the trouble all over?"

"Yes, about over fer to-night, I guess."

"And Miss Jasper—did they recover her?"

"Don't know; didn't know she was lost. Is she lost?"

"Yes; or at least I saw her carried off by a lot of ruffians. But, where are we standing?"

"We're in th' round-house, or th' little that's left of it after th' fire."

"Who ran us in here? and where is the crowd now?"

"I ran th' engine in here, when th' crowd got out of th' way. They've 'most all left th' yard now."

"Well, you look after the engine, Dan; I must go at once to the hotel and see Mr. Jasper."

"All right," was Dan's reply, and Ralph, without waiting to divest himself of his overalls and jumper, started at once.

In the mean time, when the second carriage had started in haste from the railroad, and had gone some distance, Mrs. Jasper suddenly exclaimed:

"My God! where is Jeanne?"

"Heavens! is she not here?" cried Mr. Lyman Lambert instantly, and he looked up with an expression of horror.

He had been so badly frightened and upset that he had forgotten everything save Nature's first law—"self-protection," or "preservation."

"Stop! driver, stop!" shouted Mr. Jasper.

The carriage was stopped at once, and the president of the railroad got out.

"Go on," he then ordered, "I must go back and find my daughter;" and he started at once, while the others went on to the hotel.

Going back to the car, where the crowd was beginning to disperse, Mr. Jasper made search and inquiry for the missing one, but she could not be found.

Some had seen her at the time when the mob had made its charge upon the car, when she was in the company of the conductor and Lambert, but no one could be found who had seen her since.

Mr. Jasper made a hasty search of the car and engine, and then hastened away to go to Police Headquarters, where he made a report of the circumstances of Jeanne's disappearance, and asked help to find her, which was readily promised.

Then he started back to the hotel.

When he arrived there he was met at the entrance by Redlight Ralph.

"Have you seen my daughter?" the president instantly asked.

"Heavens! have you not found her?" the young engineer gasped. "I was just on the point of asking."

"No, she has not been found. Did the men tell you she is lost?"

"No, sir, I saw her carried off; and I was making every effort to go to her rescue when some one hit me on the head and knocked me senseless."

"What can we do? Where can she be? I will give a thousand dollars to any one who will return her to me within an hour!"

"I will do all in my power to find her, sir, and without the incentive of a reward. Have you notified the police?"

"Yes, and I have made inquiry of every man I have met on the streets, friend or foe. My God! young man, she *must* be found!"

"And she *shall* be found, sir!" declared Ralph, in earnest tones.

"Yes, indeed, she must. *She must*, be recovered!" put in Lyman Lambert, who at that moment came to the door.

Ralph glanced at him in disgust.

"You had better go to bed," he said; "you might take cold."

"What?" cried Lambert, purple with rage, "you speak thus to *me*? Dog! you shall be removed from the road!"

"Good-night, sir!" said Ralph to Mr. Jasper, taking no notice of the young and cowardly director; "I will do all in my power to find your daughter."

"Thank you," the president responded, "and I pray that you may succeed."

Ralph turned away at once, and then young Lambert turned to the president and said:

"That young rascal is not to be trusted, sir!"

"Not to be trusted? What do you mean?"

"I mean just what I say, sir. It would not surprise me very much to learn that *he* is the one who is responsible for Jeanne's disappearance, and that he knows where she is."

"Nonsense!" and Mr. Jasper's tone was one of displeasure, to say the least.

"Call it nonsense if you will, but I know what I am talking about!"

"Well, what *are* you talking about? I would like to know."

"I will tell you. There is a love secret between your daughter and that young engineer, and—"

"What?"

"Just that; they love each other, and have been carrying on a desperate flirtation all night."

"Lambert, you astound me!"

"I was astounded myself; but it is true, and I felt it my duty to tell you. He is no doubt a fortune-hunter, and it is possible that he might win your daughter's regard sufficiently to induce her to elope with him. It is possible that he has already done so."

"No, no, I cannot believe that; but if what you say is true, I shall keep my eyes upon them in the future."

"And it is true, I swear it! You can satisfy yourself next time you see them together. The best thing you can do, Mr. Jasper, is to remove the rascal from the road."

"No, no, we can't do that; think of all he has done for us. That is not to be thought of. I will, however, take steps to keep my daughter from meeting him again. But, my God! where can she be?"

"Heaven only knows, sir! I hope she will come to no harm. You know she is as dear to me as to you, Mr. Jasper, since you have promised me that she shall become my wife."

"Yes, yes, that is so."

"And she *shall* be mine! I love her, and could not live without her. I am rich, I have position and money; and you, Mr. Jasper, must use your authority to keep that fortune-hunter from her presence. No knowing what harm may come of it."

"I promise you that I will do so, my boy. I loved your father, and nothing will give me more pleasure than to see you the husband of my child. You need have no fear that you will lose her."

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"Thank you sir. It will be joining money to

money; and money, as we know, is the key to all happiness. Is it not so?"

"I certainly believe it is."

"Of course it is; and what would that beggar of an engineer do with a lady for his wife? Bah! it is ridiculous."

This ended their conversation for the time, and they entered the hotel.

Meantime the other actors in our "drama of a night" had not been idle.

Mr. Morgan was busy restoring order, as far as it was possible; others had cared for the unfortunate dead, the bodies having now been removed to an undertaker's; the man who had been the cause of the accident had been safely lodged in jail, and the injured persons had been given the best medical aid the town could afford.

Mr. Humphrey, the dispatcher at Mansfield, had sent men from a station east from the place of the accident to repair the track, for although Mr. Morgan had been able to replace the rail so that trains could pass over it, carefully, the roadbed was sadly out of order. Men had been left to protect trains there till the repairs arrived, as mentioned.

But Jeanne Jasper was not found. The night wore away and morning came, and the storm having cleared, it was a morning clear and bright; but awful evidences of the night's hideous work were visible on every hand.

At an early hour Redlight Ralph, who had not been idle for a single moment, called to report to Mr. Jasper the failure of his search for the missing girl.

CHAPTER XIV.

PLAYING A TRUMP.

NONE of the party, except the injured ones, had closed their eyes in sleep during the night. To them, the original ones, opiates had of course been administered.

Yes, there was one other exception—Lyman Lambert.

He, some time after his interview with Mr. Jasper on the hotel porch, had gone up to his room and thrown himself down upon the bed, and was still fast asleep.

Redlight Ralph had been to his boarding-house and removed his overalls and blouse (his home being at Mansfield, and his "run" being between that city and Oakvale, where he had to "lay over" every other day, he had a home at each end of the route), and when he called at the hotel he was as well-dressed as any man there.

He asked at once for Mr. Jasper, and was shown to the room where the president was holding a consultation with Mr. Morgan, the superintendent.

Ralph had seen Mr. Morgan only an hour or so previously, so with only a nod to him he addressed himself at once to Mr. Jasper.

"Any news of your daughter yet, sir?" he asked.

"No," was the sad reply, "not a word. Have you learned anything?"

"Yes, I have learned something; I—"

"Tell me quickly what it is!" and Mr. Jasper, all excitement, partly rose from his chair.

"It is nothing concerning your daughter's whereabouts," Ralph explained, "but it is concerning the strikers. I have learned, on reliable authority, that they are not responsible for her disappearance."

"As I have said all along!" declared Mr. Morgan.

"They would not dare to do such a thing."

"It is not that they dare not, sir," returned Ralph, "but that they would not. They are not lost to all manhood, sir."

"So I believe," the superintendent agreed at once.

"And I am sorry it is not they," Mr. Jasper remarked.

Mr. Morgan and Ralph looked at him in quick surprise.

"You are sorry it is not they!" Mr. Morgan repeated in exclamatory tones. "And why? I do not catch your meaning, Mr. Jasper."

"My meaning is this: In their hands, my daughter would at least be secure against harm."

"Right!" cried Ralph, instantly. "But, she is not in their hands, nor in the hands of any of the labor men, so far as I can learn."

"Then where is she?"

"Shall I give you my opinion?"

"By all means. Do not hesitate to name any suspicion you may have."

"Well, I believe that Miss Jasper has been abducted by some rascal who will try to force you to pay a ransom for her return."

"The very idea!" cried Mr. Morgan. "Ten to one Raymond is right."

"It certainly looks reasonable," Mr. Jasper admitted, "and if it is so I shall not hesitate to pay whatever sum is demanded."

At that moment a servant entered with a letter.

"For Mr. Jasper," he announced, stopping just inside the door.

"I am he," Mr. Jasper said, extending his hand.

The servant advanced and delivered the letter, retiring at once, and Mr. Jasper tore it open and read it.

"You were right, young man!" he exclaimed, "my daughter has been abducted for the purpose of extorting money from me."

"The letter is from the rascals who hold her?" queried Mr. Morgan.

"Yes."

Redlight Ralph left the room at once and in haste. In the lower hall he found the servant who had delivered the letter.

"Where did you get that letter?" he asked.

"The clerk sent it up from the office, sir," was the reply.

"Will you come with me to the office? I want to learn where that letter came from."

"Certainly," the man answered, and he led the way.

Entering the office he indicated the clerk who had given him the letter.

Ralph stepped forward to the desk and inquired:

"Can you tell me, sir, who left the letter for Mr. Jasper which you just sent up to him by this man?"

"A boy left it here about five minutes ago."

"And he went away without waiting for a reply?"

"He went away at once; did not stop here a moment."

"Can you describe him?"

"No, sir, I cannot. I did not more than glance at him."

Ralph went back.

His idea had been to find, if possible, the person who had brought the letter and trace him, secretly, back to the parties who had sent it; but, he had met with disappointment.

When he entered the room where Mr. Jasper and Mr. Morgan were eagerly discussing the contents of the letter, he said:

"I hoped to catch the person who brought it, sir, but I was too late. Does the letter give any clew?"

Ralph asked the question with the air of a veteran detective.

"Not the slightest clew," Mr. Jasper replied.

"Here, though," he added, "you may read it."

Ralph took the letter and read:

"DEAR SIR:—Your girl is all safe and sound, and you can have her if you will pay us \$5,000 for her. If you won't do this, you won't see her again soon."

"Yores truly, THE COMMITTEE."

"To Mr. JASPER."

"What do you think of it?" Mr. Jasper asked.

"Committee of grandmothers!" the young engineer exclaimed in disgust. "Whose committee are they? Their letter shows them to be ignorant. They are a set of bold rascals!"

"Here is a postscript to the letter," and Mr. Jasper handed over another slip of paper.

Ralph took it and it read as follows:

"P. S.—We can't make no appointment with you, so you must let us know what you will do by aad. in this afternoon P. S. Then we will let you know."

"They deserve to be hanged!" Ralph cried in anger. "I intend to hunt them down and bring them to account for this!"

"No, no," demurred Mr. Jasper, quickly; "I will pay what they demand. I must get my child out of their hands as soon as possible."

"And I advise him not to do it," put in Mr. Morgan.

"So do I!" cried Ralph. "If you yield to them at their figure, they will demand more."

"Tell me what to do, then."

"I think I can suggest a plan," Ralph announced.

"Do so, then, for Heaven's sake. Let us be doing something."

Ralph took paper and pencil and wrote a few words, and then handed the paper to Mr. Jasper to read.

What he had written was this:

"RASCALS:—I will pay one thousand. Answer at once, by letter as before, or through the mail. You ask more than I will give."

"It is not so!" Mr. Jasper cried at once. "I will give twenty thousand if it is necessary."

"You do not see my game," said Ralph. "Let me explain. In the first place we have no way of reaching these men except through the *Post*, a newspaper published here about two o'clock in the afternoon. Suppose we put this advertisement in it. They will, of course, answer at once. One of us can be on guard at the post-office, and the other in the hotel office. The—"

"I see! I see!" cried Mr. Jasper; "I understand it all. But I do not agree to your wording of the advertisement. I will word it thus:" and taking up the pencil he wrote:

"\$5,000."

"I accept the terms. Communicate with me at once, same as before, or by mail."

"There!" he exclaimed, "that will answer the same purpose, and will at the same time insure good treatment to poor Jeanne."

"That is so," decided Mr. Morgan at once.

"Yes," Ralph acknowledged, "your plan is better than mine, unless they suspect some snare in so quick an acceptance of their demand."

"That is not likely," thought Mr. Morgan. "They will not pause to reason it out. They will be too elated to reason at all."

"Yes, I think so," Mr. Jasper coincided. "At any rate, if we fail to catch them in our snare we will have their terms and conditions of the exchange. If the trap fails us I shall pay the price, or as much more as is demanded. I am determined."

"Well, I hope the trap will not fail," Ralph averred. "I promise to do my part toward its success."

"And who will be the one to be on guard at the post-office?" inquired Mr. Morgan.

"That is my post," Ralph declared. "You may place whomsoever you please in the hotel office. I shall go and see the postmaster, explain my business, and get his permission to sit in the office where I can see every letter that is dropped into the box, and at the same time be out of sight myself. There are no street boxes in this town, and if the letter is sent by mail it must be put into the post-office."

"The moment I see a letter put in addressed to you, Mr. Jasper, I shall fix my eye on the person who puts it there, and I will follow him until I find your daughter."

"An excellent idea! It is bound to succeed!"

"So I think," Mr. Morgan agreed.

"And," added Mr. Jasper, "I will have Mr. Lambert play the same role here at the hotel."

And so they parted.

Later on, Mr. Jasper sent his version of the advertisement to the office of the *Post*, and then arranged with Lyman Lambert and the hotel clerk for the working out of the scheme there.

Redlight Ralph, though, was almost certain to get the game. He reasoned that the men would fight shy of the hotel after having delivered one letter there. The post-office though, was a place where they could go and drop a letter without the least chance of discovery.

Ralph, accordingly, went to the post-office and made his arrangements, and then nothing remained to be done but to wait for time.

Would the plan succeed? We shall see.

CHAPTER XV.

RALPH AND THE STRIKERS.

At ten o'clock a committee from the striking employees called at the hotel to meet Mr. Jasper and the directors.

They were received in one of the parlors.

Their conference was not a long one, and no settlement of the difficulty was reached. The demands of the strikers would not be acceded to by the company, and the terms of the company would not be accepted by the strikers.

And so the matter rested.

"By your hasty action," said Mr. Jasper, at the conclusion of the interview, "you have injured yourselves as much as you have injured us. It was our intention to advance the wages of all of our employees on the first of the new year, but now the great damage done to our property last night will make it impossible for us to do so."

"But, the fires were not set by us, sir," the committee protested.

"No matter; the loss to us is the same. Had there been no strike there would have been no riot, and no fires. Your sudden move was entirely unlooked for. Had we suspected that you intended to strike last night, we certainly would not have set out to come here with ladies in our party. But we anticipated no trouble. We expected to arrive here in peace, spend the remainder of the night in safety, and then meet you to-day and settle our differences amicably and satisfactorily."

"Nor had we any intention of striking, sir, until the rumor was started that you had sent word that we might go to thunder with our grievances. Then some of the hot-headed ones among us were up in arms in a moment, and the result—you know it."

"I sent no such word, my men, and the report was a false one—maliciously false."

"We believe you, sir, and we would like to find the man who started the report."

"Well, you do not agree to our terms?" Mr. Jasper queried.

"No, sir," was the firm response, "we do not. Do you agree to our terms?"

"We do not."

The committee went away, then, and the situation was the same as it had been before they came.

True to his word, Dan Dawson had mentioned Redlight Ralph to the strikers as being willing to make a speech for them, if asked to do so, and he gave Ralph such a great and enthusiastic recommendation as an orator that a committee was sent out to wait upon him and invite him to address them.

Ralph agreed to do so, or at least make the attempt, but he would not consent to address them in private meeting. What he had to say, he declared, should be said with open doors or not at all.

This was agreed to, and eleven o'clock was the hour set.

The news flew through the town—a young engineer to address the strikers in public meeting; and everybody and his neighbors, it seemed, set out for the hall where the meeting was to be held.

The same committee also waited upon Mr. Jasper and invited him to be present, and as the hour drew near he and Mr. Morgan, with the directors, repaired to the hall.

Promptly at eleven o'clock Ralph Raymond was introduced.

The hall was packed. There was barely standing-room on any part of the floor. Ralph had never faced such a crowd in his life. In fact, it was his first attempt at addressing a meeting.

Making a bow, he managed to say—"Ladies and gentlemen"—there were many women present—but there he faltered and could get no further. His face flushed, his lips moved, but no sound came from them. Was the young engineer going to fail in his attempt? It was a terrible moment, and all who understood the cause, which was what is popularly set down as "stage fright," pitied the young engineer.

Just at the critical moment an old engineer in the audience sprang to his feet and exclaimed:

"My boy, she's a-slippin'! Shut off and drop a little sand, and then give her steam easy-like till she bites! Keep yer left hand onto th' throttle, and look straight ahead. You'll be all right as soon as you get up this little grade."

The spell was broken.

Ralph turned toward the old man and said:

"Thank you, Uncle Mose; I guess she will pull now. That was a bad spot. I guess somebody sowed the track for me!"

This fairly "brought down the house," and Ralph soon had full control of his nerves.

"Ladies and gentlemen,"—he began again, and this time he went on successfully.

At first his remarks were not very well connected, nor exactly to the point; but he gained confidence as he proceeded, and in a few minutes had his subject fairly in hand.

And he soon had his audience listening to his every word with rapt attention.

As a speaker he was a success.

This is not the place to repeat his speech; in truth, it is foreign to the interest of our story; but we must add that it was one of the most powerful arguments that audience had ever listened to on the relations of capital and labor.

The laborers, the capitalists, the old and the young, all listened as they had never listened before, and when Ralph bowed and stepped down from the platform, after a full hour's speech, the hall rung with cheers for the young engineer.

Mr. Jasper stepped instantly before the audience, and as soon as he could make himself heard, said:

"If the employees of the M. C. & O. Railroad will go at once into secret session, and appoint a committee to wait upon me at the hotel, I am sure our differences can be settled. The situation has just been set forth as neither you nor we could have explained it. We must not be antagonistic toward each other; we must be friends. Your welfare and ours demand it."

"Three cheers for Redlight Ralph!" was the cry, and they were given with a will.

"And three more for President Jasper!" and again did the walls tremble.

No speech had ever created half the excitement and enthusiasm in that town before.

Right after dinner a committee from the strikers waited upon the president.

"We are instructed to say," said the chairman of the committee, as soon as they were formally received, "that, although our demand was a just one, we are willing, in view of the sad work of last night, to return to work at our old rate of wages if, at the end of three months, you will advance us to one-half the increase we first demanded."

"Spoken like men!" exclaimed the president. And then he added:

"But those terms are not quite satisfactory to us."

Dark clouds settled upon every face in an instant.

"No," Mr. Jasper repeated, "they are not quite satisfactory to us. We are willing to grant an advance at once, an advance to half of what you first demanded. Is this satisfactory?"

"It is!" was the quick reply, as the faces brightened once more. "And we thank you, sir," was added.

"This is what we should have agreed upon in the first place," Mr. Jasper remarked.

"That is so," admitted the chairman of the committee, "but neither of us would have agreed to it."

"You are right. We were blind!"

"And now," said the chairman, "in case our terms were accepted by you, we were instructed to say that we, as a body, are willing to remit two days' pay next month toward bearing the loss of last night's fires, though we were not the cause of the riot directly, so far as we can learn."

"That offer," said Mr. Jasper, "we cannot accept. This county will have to indemnify the loss to the company, and the public will have to bear the burden. You who live here will each have to bear your share of it, indirectly. We will lose a great deal, of course, but the larger portion of the loss will have to be borne by the tax-paying public."

"We know it, sir, and we see things in a new light now. If we had had Redlight Ralph for our leader, this strike would not have been made at all."

"I believe you."

"Well, sir, do you want us to sign papers of agreement?"

"No; you keep your word with us and we will live up to ours. Let us shake hands, man and man, and be friends."

It was an affecting scene. Silently they all shook hands, and then the committee took their leave and went back to report the result of their conference.

Half an hour later every man was at his post of duty, and the strike was at an end.

Redlight Ralph's name was upon everybody's lips, and one and all had a good word to say of him.

No, there was one who had not—one whose lips formed his name but to curse him.

That one was Lyman Lambert.

He, too, had been present at the meeting in the public hall, and had smiled with grim satisfaction at Ralph's failure to start off like a veteran orator.

"The boob!" he had mentally exclaimed, "to attempt to make a speech when he hasn't enough words to express his feeble ideas."

But Mr. Lambert soon found his mistake. Ralph proved not only a fluent talker, but a very clear-headed, intelligent one; and as for words—his vocabulary seemed exceedingly precise and expressive.

And, as Lyman Lambert listened, he was almost charmed, as he would have been but for the fact that in Ralph he beheld a most formidable rival, and knowing, as he did, how superior Ralph was to him in every way, except in wealth, his face grew purple with suppressed rage and hatred.

It was a bitter pill indeed.

"Curse him!" he half-muttered afterward, "he will beat me. He will win old Jasper over, and I shall be set adrift. No! by heavens! he shall not marry that girl! I will kill him before he shall snatch her from me. She is mine."

And he meant what he said.

His heart was wholly evil, he was a cowardly fellow, and in him Ralph had a treacherous enemy.

CHAPTER XVI.

A RIGHT-HAND FOR LAMBERT.

ABOUT two o'clock Redlight Ralph went to the post-office, Mr. Jasper and Lyman Lambert taking their places in the office of the hotel at the same time.

Redlight Ralph knew what he was doing when he chose the post-office as his place of concealment and shadow-duty.

He had to wait long and patiently.

Many letters were carried in and dropped into the box, and Ralph, seated where he could pick them up instantly and look at them, and at the same time take notice, through a small hole, of the persons depositing them, kept close and careful watch.

At last, about four o'clock, when the crowd at the office was greatest, a short, thick-set, rough-looking man sauntered in, advanced to the box and dropped a letter into it.

Ralph caught it up instantly. It was addressed to Mr. Jasper at the hotel, and was marked "in haste."

Throwing the letter back into the box, for of course the postmaster would not have allowed him to take it out; even had he cared to do so, Ralph indicated to that official that he had discovered his man, and started out.

The rough-looking man was going out of the office, leisurely, and Ralph followed after him.

Ralph was not alone. He had chosen five good men, one of whom was his fireman, to stand on guard near the post-office, and when he came out he saw that they were ready to follow him.

He pointed at once to the man he was following, so that they too might all be able to keep watch of him, and thus they went down the street, the man ahead all unconscious of being followed.

The fellow went down the main street for quite a distance, and then turned into a cross-street not far from the hall where Ralph had addressed the strikers.

Down that street to the first corner he continued, there turned into another street, and finally stopped before a house whose shutters were drawn directly in the rear of the public hall.

There were quite a number of people in the street, and the presence of Redlight Ralph was not likely to cause the fellow any uneasiness.

Ralph's men, except one, were further behind.

The fellow paused, turned up the steps to the front door of the house, and entered.

Ralph hardly knew what to do then, having never before had any experience in the detective line, but he knew that everything now depended on him and his men.

Stopping at once, he turned to the man who was with him, and said:

"I am going into that house. You get the other boys, and guard the house well. If you hear me fire my revolver, break down the door and rush in."

"All right, we'll do it. Don't be afraid to depend on us. We will stand to you, no matter what comes."

Ralph had noticed that the man had entered without ringing, and apparently without unlocking the door, and from these facts he reasoned that the door must be unlocked.

He walked up the steps, and was just in the act of putting out his hand to try the door, when something fell with a slight noise upon the steps behind him.

Instantly he turned to learn what it was, and discovered a woman's bracelet.

Picking it up, he recognized it at once as belonging to Jeanne Jasper, and glanced upward at the windows.

At one window, one at the top story of the house and directly over the stoop, he saw a small white hand sticking out from between the blinds of the shutter.

Was it Jeanne?

Tapping the bracelet with his finger, and then pointing up, Ralph tried to ask by signs if the bracelet belonged to the one whose hand he saw.

Instantly the hand waved the signal—"yes."

Ralph's five men were by this time all at the corner, and he motioned for them to approach.

When his men came up Ralph directed one of them to go for policemen, and then motioned the other to follow him.

All of them were armed.

Ralph tried the door carefully, found it unlocked, and entered silently, the others at his heels.

Loud voices were heard in a room at the rear of the hall.

"Go to that door, silently," Ralph directed, "and guard it with your revolvers while I go up-stairs."

The men obeyed, and Ralph ascended the stairs.

It was an unfurnished house, and the utmost care had to be observed not to make a noise.

Up and up the young engineer went, until he reached the top floor, and then he advanced to a door at the front end of the upper hall.

There was a key in the lock, and turning it, Ralph threw open the door.

There, on a chair near the window, sat Jeanne Jasper, her arms tied at her sides, leaving only the forearms free; a gag was in her mouth, to prevent her from calling for help, and she was bound to the chair, which was the only piece of furniture the room contained.

"Thank Heaven I have found you!" exclaimed Ralph, in a whisper, as he sprang to her side and released her arms and removed the cruel gag.

"Oh! I knew you would come!" the poor girl cried, as she threw herself upon his breast, weeping. "I knew you would find me, and I have waited, oh! so patiently! for your coming."

"Yes, I have found you, and now I must hasten to take you to the hotel. Have you been bound in that cruel position all day?"

"No, not all day. I was kept in a rear room all the forenoon, and oh! Ralph! I heard your speech to the strikers, every word! and I love you—I love you! Your voice came to me through an open window at the rear of the hall."

Ralph blushed, but he pressed the girl to him and showered her face with kisses.

"I may never be able to win your hand, Jeanne," he said, "but I love you, and life without you will be a blank to me. I, a poor engineer, to aspire to the hand of the daughter of a millionaire—No, no, it is impossible. I dare not ask it. Would to God that you were as poor as I!"

"It is not impossible!" Jeanne cried. "I am yours—yours from this hour, if you will have it so."

"No, no, that would be dishonorable of me. Jeanne. I will wait and work to win you."

They were suddenly interrupted.

In their excitement they had dropped their guarded tones, and the sound of their voices had penetrated to the room below.

A door was heard to open, and then instantly came loud voices, some in curses, others in command.

"Stop! Throw up your hands, or you are dead men!"

Such was the command of the railroad men.

"Pardon me," said Ralph, as he drew his revolver and sprang to the door, "but I must assist my men. I will return for you in a moment."

Down the stairs he ran, taking in three and four steps at every stride, and in a moment was at the scene of action.

The moment the men in the room had flung open the door, the railroad men met them face to face with ready revolvers, and pressed forward into the room, holding the rascals at bay.

"You dogs!" cried Ralph, "you deserve to die in your tracks! Secure their hands, Dan, every one of them."

The fireman obeyed, and while he was at work the fifth man entered with two policemen and the prisoners were turned over to them.

Jeanne Jasper had followed Ralph down, and now he took her arm in his and conducted her from the house and to the hotel, entering by way of the office.

Lyman Lambert and Mr. Jasper were still on duty there.

"Saved! thank God!" cried Mr. Jasper, and he rushed forward and clasped his daughter to his heart. Then turning to Ralph, he said:

"Ralph Raymond, I owe you more than I can ever pay. You shall be rewarded." And then he led Jeanne from the room.

Lyman Lambert was white with rage, and was fairly beside himself. Taking a quick stride across the room, he stepped before Ralph and gave him a stinging slap in the face, exclaiming:

"Do you know what that means, you lout?"

Ralph's reply was instantaneous and to the point. It was a lightning-like blow straight from the shoulder, and Lyman Lambert was lifted from his feet and hurled backward into a corner, where he fell senseless to the floor.

The next moment a servant came and said that Mr. and Mrs. Jasper desired to see Ralph Raymond in their room.

CHAPTER XVII.

LYMAN LAMBERT'S REVENGE.

REDLIGHT RALPH followed the servant up to Mr. Jasper's room, and when he was admitted he found himself in the presence of Mr. Jasper, Mrs. Jasper, and Jeanne.

"Mr. Raymond," said Mr. Jasper, "Mrs. Jasper desired me to thank you personally for the great service you have rendered us."

Ralph bowed.

"Yes," said Mrs. Jasper, "I desire to thank you personally. To you we owe a debt of gratitude we can never repay. But, what is the matter with your hand? It is bleeding!"

Ralph looked, and, true enough, his right hand was bleeding freely. It being benumbed by the blow he had given Lyman Lambert, he had not felt the blood.

Quickly applying his handkerchief to it, he said:

"I was not aware of it. Pardon me, I received a slap in the face a moment ago, and no doubt cut my hand in returning the compliment."

"Havens!" gasped Mrs. Jasper, "who was it struck you? Who was the wretch, after all you have done?"

"It was Mr. Lyman Lambert."

Mr. and Mrs. Jasper were astounded and speechless, but Jeanne clapped her hands with girlish glee and cried:

"Good! good! He has shown himself in his true character now, and has got what he deserves. I am glad of it."

"Jeanne, Jeanne," said Mrs. Jasper reprovingly, "remember he is your intended husband."

Jeanne laughed merrily.

"Do you think I would marry him?" she cried; "never! He is a brute and a coward, and I despise him utterly."

"And by heavens you are right!" exclaimed Mr. Jasper. "He is no more like his father was than day is like night. I have been finding him out of late, but still I hoped that my suspicions were unfounded."

"Thank you, papa, thank you!" and Jeanne caught her father's hand in hers. "You know I never consented to marry Lyman Lambert; I was silent on the subject. I did not wish openly to oppose your wishes, but I was determined never to marry him. What cared I for his wealth, when my heart was already given to another?"

"Your heart given to another!" cried the parents together; "to whom?"

"To Ralph Raymond," Jeanne answered, and leaving her father she stepped to Ralph's side, quickly adding:

"Yes, I love him, and he loves me. He is poor, and would never, for that reason, have asked you

for my hand. I ask it for him. Oh! papa and mamma, give us your consent and make us both happy!"

Mr. Jasper stood pale and trembling; Mrs. Jasper sunk down upon a chair, weeping.

What their thoughts were we will not attempt to guess.

Ralph was the first to speak.

He took Jeanne's hand in his, held it firmly, and said:

"Mr. Jasper, and you Mrs. Jasper, it is all true, though from my lips you would never have learned my—*secret* until I had gained a position placing me nearer to your daughter's station in life. Now that the truth is made known, however, I ask your consent—not to an immediate marriage, for we are both young and can wait; but to our union at some future day, when I shall have raised myself to a higher station in life."

Mr. Jasper turned to his wife and asked:

"Mary, are you willing to have our Jeanne marry Ralph Raymond?"

"Yes," Mrs. Jasper answered, between her sobs, "I am, but not at present."

"No, not at present," Mr. Jasper agreed, and then turning again to Ralph, he answered:

"Ralph Raymond, you have our consent. How old are you?"

"I am not quite twenty," Ralph answered.

"Very well. At the end of three years you may come to me again. In the mean time attend strictly to duty. Go on as you have begun, and you are bound to rise. Between you and Lyman Lambert it has been, it seems, a fight of manhood against money; and let me tell you that manhood is the better possession of the two."

"Thank you!" said Ralph, his voice trembling with emotion; "I shall strive to retain your goodwill, and make myself worthy of your daughter." And turning to Jeanne he caught her to his breast and kissed her.

Jeanne returned his caress, and then the next moment flew to embrace her father and mother.

Redlight Ralph had won his bride!

Later in the day a special train was got ready, and the party started on their return to Mansfield.

The train consisted of two cars, and in one were two coffins containing the bodies of the dead director and brakeman.

It was not the same joyous party that set out from Mansfield on the previous night. In fact not more than half were returning, for the injured—Mr. Howell and the two ladies—had to remain at Oakvale, and others remained with them.

The return trip was made without incident worthy of mention, and in due time Ralph's engine pulled into the Mansfield station.

When the party alighted from the cars they paused at the engine a moment to bid good-night to Ralph, and then sought their homes.

Lyman Lambert, though, slunk out of the station alone and unnoticed.

Somewhat later Redlight Ralph was ordered to go to Cranston, with a special car, and bring Mr. Lambert to Mansfield.

The explanation was that he, Lambert, had missed the last regular train from that place, and must reach home that night; and he had been particular in ordering that Ralph Raymond should be the one to run him through.

Ralph left Mansfield about eleven-thirty at night, and lost no time on the road, but rushed forward toward his destination about as fast as he could go.

And now to show the villainy there was at work, and the danger he was in.

The reader will recall the names of Jack Daws and Giles Given, who were the conductor and engineer, respectively, of the stock-train with which Ralph came so near colliding on that memorable night.

These two men were friends of Lyman Lambert's, and had been given their positions through his favor.

They were promptly discharged by Mr. Morgan, after their wild work of that night, and as soon as possible they called upon Mr. Lambert to help them to another job.

They were just the men Lambert wanted to assist him in carrying out a heinous idea his evil brain had found.

He sent them to Cranston, and a few days later he went there himself to meet them.

When they met, Lambert exposed his whole plan to them, and promised them one thousand dollars each if they would help him to carry it out.

His plan was this:

He would send word to Mansfield that he had missed the Express-train, and would ask Mr. Morgan to send Ralph up with a special car to get him. He would make sure that it was Ralph who was running the engine, and then would send Daws and Given about a mile above the Cranston station, to signal the train and stop it, and then they were to seize Ralph, bind him fast, and start the engine off at full speed.

It would be certain to collide with some train, and then Ralph Raymond would be removed from his path forever.

And no blame could fall upon him. He could prove by the operator at Cranston that he had been in the office all the time, and no suspicion would be formed against him.

And his plan worked admirably.

As soon as he received word from Mansfield that the special had started, with Ralph as its engineer, he communicated the fact to his two hirelings, by a prearranged signal, and then sat down to await the result.

Daws and Given went to a place about a mile from the station, and there waited to signal the engine when it came.

Several trains passed, but by consulting their watches the two rascals were able to calculate about when Ralph would come along, and so other trains were not molested.

At last the time drew near for Ralph to be coming, and presently the whistle of the "Quickstep" was heard.

Then the villains lighted their redlight and prepared for their heinous deed.

The moment Ralph came around a curve some distance away he caught sight of the redlight, and at once whistled "brakes," and then brought his engine to a stop a short distance from where the redlight stood.

Before he had quite stopped, though, Daws and Given had sprung aboard, and ere the engineer or fireman were aware of their presence, they received blows which knocked them senseless.

There were a conductor and one brakeman in the car, but the engine was cut loose from that at once, and the car was left standing there.

After cutting off the car, the engine was run ahead some distance and then stopped. Then the fireman was taken off and laid along the fence by the side of the road, and Ralph was bound hand and foot. Then Daws got off, and Given, first pulling the throttle wide open, jumped off after him.

Away the engine flew, and in a few moments it dashed past the Cranston station like a bolt of lightning.

"What train is that?" Lyman Lambert calmly asked, as he sat in the office quietly puffing away at a fragrant cigar.

"Heavens!" cried the operator in alarm, "I do not know; but there is a freight-train coming only a short distance away, and there will surely be a collision!"

What could save Ralph Raymond now?

CHAPTER XVIII.

REDLIGHT RALPH'S VICTORY.

REDLIGHT RALPH was certainly in great danger, and unless some friendly hand interposed, he was surely doomed.

A freight-train was coming less than two miles away, having the right of road, and, as the Cranston operator had exclaimed, a collision seemed certain to follow.

And Ralph was fully alive to his danger now. He was beginning to return to consciousness when the engine was started, and when it flashed past the Cranston station he realized his danger.

And now, too, he understood the whole vile plot. He had wondered not a little why Lyman Lambert should desire him to run his special train, and now he knew.

Vainly he tugged and pulled at his bonds. They were secure. He was alone, helpless, doomed! A cold perspiration broke out upon his face; his whole life passed before him in a moment; and in his horror and despair he became almost mad.

But it was not of long duration.

Even while the engine was approaching and passing the station, a dark form was passing along the running-board on the left-hand side, and in a moment more a boyish form entered the cab. A boy it was!

Quickly he sprung to the throttle and shut off steam, and then applied the "air."

What had been an age of horror to Ralph, had in reality been but a moment or two, and now it was over.

"God bless you, whoever you are!" he exclaimed. "Please free my hands and feet, for we are in deadly peril!"

The boy quickly obeyed, and Ralph sprung up, reversed the engine, and started back toward the station.

"Boy," he said, then, "you have saved my life. Who are you?"

"I am the ex-operator at Cranston—the one who let train No. 9 get away the other night," was the reply; and as he spoke the boy moved to where the light from the gauge lamp fell upon his face.

"God bless you!" Ralph exclaimed again; "give me your hand!" and he pressed the boy's hand warmly.

The boy's story was soon told.

Being out of work, he had been idling around the station, and had overheard the plotting of Lyman Lambert and his hirelings, and resolved to balk their game. He had watched Daws and Given, and followed them to the scene of their evil work, and as soon as the engine had stopped he sprung up on the pilot and remained there curled up on the frame until the engine had passed the station, when he hastened into the cab as shown.

But for him Ralph would have met a certain and horrible death.

Ralph did not stop at the station, but ran right back to where the car had been left. There he found his fireman and the conductor, both almost wild from suspense; and further away was the brakeman, doing "flag" duty.

The engine and car were quickly coupled, the "flag" was "whistled in," and then the special train ran on to the Cranston station, where the freight-train which Ralph would have met had he gone on, had just arrived.

Ralph had cautioned the others not to say a word concerning what had happened, and he turned his engine, took water, and made ready for the return trip as calmly as though nothing had happened.

When he was ready to return he pulled up to the station, he and the conductor got their orders, and the conductor notified Mr. Lambert that they were ready.

That rascal, pale and apprehensive, took his place in the car, and the train started.

Calm as they had been, however, Ralph and the

conductor had not been idle, for they had written lengthy telegrams, explaining the affair in full, and these, at the last moment, one given to the operator to be sent to the superintendent after the train had gone.

When the train arrived at Mansfield two policemen were at hand, and, much to Mr. Lyman Lambert's surprise and dismay, they made him their prisoner.

At first he attempted to bully and bluster, but he soon realized that he had "put his foot into it" badly.

He was locked up at once.

Mr. Morgan had telegraphed to the police at Cranston, too, and before morning came word was received that Jack Daws and Giles Given had been captured.

And now our story draws to its ending.

Lyman Lambert would have been severely dealt with by the law, had he not carried his case to a higher Tribunal by committing suicide, like the coward he was.

Tim Flinn was hanged, as he deserved, for his crime, and Jack Daws and Giles Given were punished severely for theirs.

Mr. Howell, the two ladies, and Phil Peters, all recovered from their injuries.

The farmer and his son who had caught and delivered Tim Flinn to justice, were both rewarded, as were all others to whom reward was due, especially Charlie Chester, the telegraph operator on the Windsor, Haddington & Middleburgh Railroad at Hillsdale, who had performed such gallant service in saving the collision of two Express-trains.

The other operator, the one who had been the cause of the almost collision, and who had afterward saved Redlight Ralph, was re-employed, and is to-day one of the best men in the company's service.

As soon as Mr. Howell was able to attend a meeting of the directors, he brought up the subject of the train-order service on the road, and explained its dangers, as he, after further and careful investigation, understood them. And the matter received prompt attention. No train, it was decided, should receive orders to run to any point regardless of a train "held" by an operator, in any case where a delay not to exceed ten minutes would secure the signatures of the conductor and engineer of the opposing train; but in cases where such orders were found necessary, the operator receiving the order to "hold" the opposing train should put "ordoes" on the rail and his redlights (two) in position before repeating his order as "understood."

This rendered such train-orders almost faultless and entirely safe.

About one year after the time of our story, Mr. Morgan resigned his position as superintendent of the road, and Ralph Raymond, much to his surprise was appointed to succeed him.

But he was able to fill the position, and did fill it, with credit to himself and satisfaction to all, aided as he was by Mr. Jasper's constant help and advice.

One of his first official acts, after his promotion, was to advance Dan Dawson to the position he had just vacated as engineer of the "Quickstep."

And Dan holds that position to-day.

Phil Peters, poor fellow! is dead, but he is not forgotten, and many are the reminiscences told of him when, on cold winter nights his old comrades gather about the stove in the round-house to pass a pleasant hour in telling stories of the rail.

Two years after his promotion Ralph again asked Mr. Jasper for Jeanne's hand in marriage, and a few months later there was a wedding.

Two years more have passed since then, and now Ralph Raymond, twenty five years of age, is general manager of the road on which he began his career as fireman.

Horace Humphrey, the former dispatcher, is now superintendent, and Clark Conrad, who will be remembered by the reader as the dispatcher's operator at Mansfield, is now dispatcher.

Jeanne is proud of her noble young husband, and, none the less so of her little boy who bears his father's name. And the grand-parents, they are proud of them all!

The M. C. & O. Railroad is to-day one of the most happy and prosperous little roads in the land. There employers and employees work shoulder to shoulder and hand in hand for the common good of all. And there Ralph Raymond holds the reins. He cares nothing for the "dignity" of his position, and nothing pleases him more than to put on his overalls and jumper and take his old place upon the foot-board of the "Quickstep," which he not infrequently does. There he is "at home," and still clings to him his old name of "Redlight Ralph."

THE END.

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